PRICE SIXPENCE

NINETY THREE

VICTOR HUGO

LIFE, FORTUNE, AND HAPPINESS.

"Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.
"Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold,
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace."
Tennyson.

IMPORTANT TO ALL.—As a natural product of nature, use ENO'S FRUIT SALT, prepared from Sound Ripe Fruit. You cannot overstate its great value in keeping the BLOOD PURE. Without such a simple precaution the JEOPARDY of life is immensely increased. As a means of keeping the system clear, and thus taking away the groundwork of Malarious Diseases, and all Liver Complaints, or as a Health-giving, Refreshing, Cooling, and Invigorating Beverage, or as a Gentle Laxative and Tonic in the various Forms of Indigestion.

HEADACHE, DIARRHŒA, &c.—"HOTEL DE CURONNE, MORAT, SWITZERLAND, Jan. 28th, 1882.—Dear Sir,—Whilst staying for a short period at Morat, I met an old friend and patient of mine, who was likewise on a tour for the sake of his health. He had been suffering from giddiness when rising in the morning, perpetual nausea, and constant attacks of severe diarrhœa. He had consulted several London and Parisian doctors without receiving any lasting remedy. I examined him professionally, yet I own I was puzzled at his case. He appeared to be in a thoroughly bad state, and not long for this world; but, bethinking me of the wonderful remedy my wife had given me whilst I was an invalid (suffering under somewhat similar yet much slighter circumstances), I recommended it to him. This remedy was ENO'S FRUIT SALT. I procured three bottles, and directed my patient to take a dose morning and night. He did so, and at the termination of a short period he expressed himself cured. Sir, I write to you (as a professional man) to thank you for your great invention, which has cured myself, my patient, and many other poor sufferers. I now wish to express to the public (should you think fit to make use of my testimonial), that I recommend ENO'S FRUIT SALT as a sure cure for Headache, Diarrhœa, Nausea, Giddiness, &c., and as a pleasant summer drink to those needing a mild aperient. —I am, yours sincerely" (an M.D.).

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ENO'S FRUIT SALT.

AN IMPERATIVE HYGIENIC NEED.—It keeps the blood pure, prevents fevers and acute inflammatory diseases, removes the injurious effects of stimulants, excitement, narcotics, such as alcohol, tobacco, tea, coffee, by natural means; thus restores the nervous system to its normal condition by preventing the great danger of poisoned blood and over-cerebral activity, sleeplessness, irritability, worry, etc. Should be kept in every bedroom and travelling-trunk, for any emergency; always useful; can never do any harm. If its great value in keeping the body in health were universally known, no family would be without it. It is the BEST PREVENTIVE of and CURE for BILIOUSNESS, Sick-Headache, Skin Eruptions, Pimples on the Face, Giddiness, Fevers, Blood Poisons, Mental Depression, Want of Appetite, Constipation, Vomiting, Thirst, etc., and to remove the effects of errors in Eating and Drinking. It is invaluable to those who are Fagged, Weary, or Worn Out, or anyone whose duties require them to undergo Mental or Unnatural Excitement or Strain; it keeps the blood pure, and prevents disastrous diseases by natural means.

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PREPARED ONLY AT

ENO'S FRUIT SALT WORKS, Hatcham, London, S.E., by J. C. Eno's Patent.

RB 122.957

"NINETY-THREE."

"NINETY-THREE"

(QUATREVINGT-TREIZE)

BY

VICTOR HUGO

Translated by

SIR GILBERT CAMPBELL, BART.

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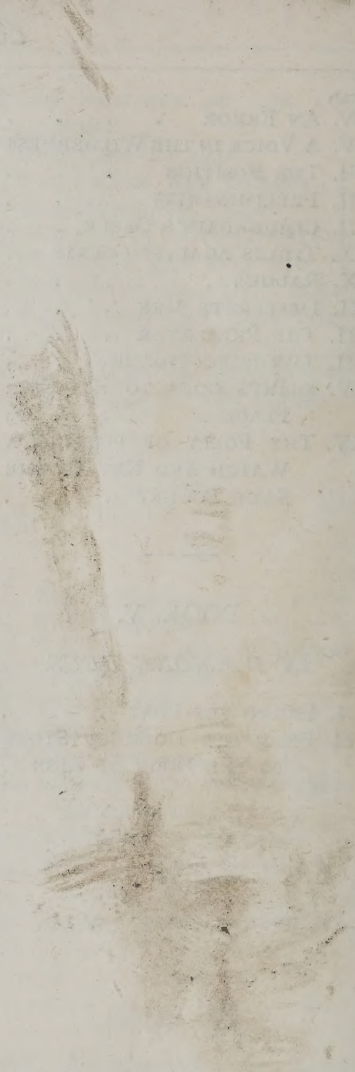

"NINETY-THREE."

First Part.

BOOK I.

THE FOREST OF SANDRAIE.

In the concluding days of May, 1793, one of the Parisian battalions dispatched into Brittany by Santerre, was feeling its way through the much-dreaded Forest of Sandraie, in Astillé.

The regiment was not more than three hundred strong, for it had been almost decimated by the pitiless hand of war.

It was at this period, shortly after the actions of Argonne, Jemmapes, and Valmy, that out of the six hundred volunteers who had constituted the First Parisian regiment, only twenty-seven men were left, of the Second, thirty-three, and of the Third, fifty-seven.

It was the time of epic combats. Each regiment sent to La Vendée from Paris was nine hundred and twelve strong, and had a battery of three guns attached to it. These regiments had been rapidly mustered. On the 25th of April, Gohier being Minister of Justice, and Bouchotte Minister of War, the Committee of Bon Conseil had proposed to send regiments of volunteers into La Vendée. Aubin the member of Council had sent in his report, and on the 1st of May Santerre was in a position to dispatch twelve thousand soldiers and thirty field-pieces with a regiment of gunners. These battalions were raised so quickly, and their discipline was so good, that the same method has ever since been pursued in forming regiments of the line. The proportionate numbers of non-commissioned officers and privates was at that time altered.

On the 28th of April the Commune of Paris gave to the troops of Santerre these orders, "*No mercy and no quarter.*" By the end of May, out of the twelve thousand that set out from Paris eight thousand had perished. The regiment which was entangled in the Forest of Sandraie had to keep constantly on the alert. The men were unable to advance quickly. They had at one and the same moment to look to the right and left, and to keep watch to the front and rear. Kléber used to say, "*A soldier should have eyes in his back.*" They had been on the move for a long time now. What time was it? and at what period of the day had they arrived at? It was difficult to reply to this question, for there is always a certain kind of twilight in these wild thickets, and in the depths of the forest it is never very light. Many tragedies were connected with the Forest of Sandraie. It was within its shades, in the month of November, 1792, that civil war had just commenced its crimes. Mousqueton, the ferocious cripple, haunted the ill-omened depths of the wood; and the number of murders that had been committed were enough to make the hairs of the head stand erect. Few spots were more dreaded, and the soldiers took every precaution when penetrating into its recesses.

All around was full of flowers, and on every side the light rustle of the branches seemed to distil the charming fragrance of

the leaves. The rays of the sun managed here and there to pierce through the green arch of foliage, whilst beneath the feet were the gladiolas, the marsh marigold, the field narcissus, the wood daisy, that little flower which is a sign of fine weather, which studded and adorned a carpet of green turf, upon which could be found every species of moss, from that which resembled velvet to that which has the appearance of a star of the heavens.

Step by step the soldiers pushed on in silence, pressing back the tangle as they did so. High above the points of the bayonets the birds twittered and chirped in the air.

The Forest of Sandraie was one of those spots where, in peaceful times, the sport called the Houicheba, which is bird-catching by night, used to be carried on, now they were trying to catch men.

The forest was composed of oak, birch trees, and beeches; the ground was level, and the thick coating of grass and moss which covered it deadened the sound of the soldiers' feet. There were hardly any paths, and when by chance they struck upon one, it speedily disappeared in the brushwood. The hollies, sloe trees, ferns, and brambles rendered it impossible to see a man at ten paces' distance.

Sometimes a heron or a moor-hen flapped lazily through the branches overhead, showing that there were marshes in the vicinity; still they pushed on, moving forwards in doubt and hesitation, as though dreading to find what they were seeking for. From time to time they came across the traces of former camping grounds, patches of ashes, the grass trodden down, sticks arranged in the forms of crosses, and blood-stained branches. Here soup had been made, there mass had been celebrated, and on this spot the injuries of wounded men had been attended to. But the former occupiers of these places had all disappeared. Where were they? Far away perhaps, or it may be close by, hidden in some secure lurking-place with a musket gripped tightly in their hands. The forest seemed entirely given over to solitude.

The men of the regiment redoubled their caution. For them the solitude engendered distrust.

No one was in sight; there was, therefore, the more reason to dread some one's approach. They were in a forest that had an evil reputation.

There was every chance of an ambush. Thirty grenadiers, thrown out as skirmishers and commanded by a sergeant, covered the advance of the regiment a good distance in front.

The vivandière of the regiment was with them. The vivandières often prefer to accompany the advanced guards. There is more risk, but then there is the chance of seeing something. Curiosity is one of the phases of feminine bravery.

All of a sudden the men of the advanced guard experienced that strange feeling which the hunter does when game is near. They fancied that they could hear the sound of breathing in a thicket in front, and imagined that they could detect a movement in the foliage.

The men made signs to each other.

In the duties of the skirmishers to obtain information there is no necessity for the officer to take any part,—the men are best left to act for themselves.

In less than a minute the exact point where the movement had been seen was detected, and a circle of muskets, their muzzles pointing to one common centre, was formed.

Every gun was pointed towards the gloomy centre of the thicket, and the men, with their fingers on the trigger, only waited the word of command from the sergeant to pour a volley into the suspicious spot.

But in the meantime the vivandière had taken the risk of peeping through the brushwood, and just as the sergeant was about to exclaim "Fire!" she called out, "Halt!" and turning towards the soldiers, cried out, "Do not fire, comrades," and threw herself into the thickest portion of the coppice.

The men followed her.

There was indeed some one hiding there. In the densest part of the thicket, in one of those small round spaces which the charcoal burner leaves in the forests, in a sort of hole made in the branches, in a perfect chamber of foliage half open like an alcove, was a woman seated in the grass suckling an infant, whilst two other

children were slumbering, their fair heads resting on her knees.

This was the only ambush.

"What are you doing here?" cried the vivandière.

The woman lifted up her head.

The vivandière continued in an angry tone of voice,—"Are you mad to be in such a place?" then she added, "A little more, and it would have been all up with you;" then turning to the soldiers she said, "It is a woman."

"Faith, we can see that easily enough," answered one of the grenadiers.

The vivandière went on, "To come into the forest to get massacred,—who ever heard of such folly?"

The woman seemed utterly stupefied, filled with terror and amazement; she glanced round as though in a dream at those guns, those sabres, those bayonets, and the fierce faces behind them.

The two children woke up, and began to cry.

"I am hungry," said one.

"I am frightened," said the other.

The baby still clung to the breast.

The vivandière addressed it. "You know what is the right thing," said she.

The mother was dumb with terror.

The sergeant cried out, "Don't be frightened, we belong to the regiment of the Red Cap."

The woman trembled from head to foot. She fixed her eyes upon the rough face of the sergeant, nothing of which was visible except the eyebrows, the moustache, and two eyes that gleamed like coals of fire.

"It used to be the Regiment of the Red Cross," added the vivandière.

Then the sergeant spoke again.

"Who are you, Madame?"

The woman stared at him more terrified than ever; she was thin, young, pale, and in rags; she wore the coarse hood of the Breton women, and a woollen cloak fastened round the neck with a cord. She allowed her bare bosom to remain exposed with all the indifference of an animal. Her feet, which were without shoes, were torn and bleeding.

"She is a beggar wench," said the sergeant.

Then the vivandière spoke again in her soldier-like voice, in which, however, there was an under-current of feminine softness.

"What is your name?"

The woman murmured almost indistinctly, "Michelle Fléchard."

The vivandière caressed the little head of the infant with her large hand. "What is the age of this little one?" asked she.

The woman did not seem to comprehend her.

"I asked you the age," persisted the vivandière.

"Ah!" answered the mother, "eighteen months."

"Why, it is quite a big one," replied the vivandière; "you must wean it, I'll teach it to eat soup."

The mother began to feel her confidence returning. The two little children showed more curiosity than fright, and were lost in admiration at the plumes in the shakos.

"Ah," remarked the mother, "they are very hungry," then she added, "and I have no more milk."

"We will give them something to eat," cried the sergeant, "and something for yourself too. But that is not everything. Let us hear your political opinions."

The woman stared at him again, but made no reply.

"Do you understand what I asked you?"

She stammered out, "I was very young when they put me into a convent, but I am married now; I did not take the veil. The Sisters taught me to speak French. They set fire to our village. We ran away so quickly that I had no time to put my shoes on."

"I asked you what were your political opinions."

"I don't understand the meaning of what you say."

The sergeant continued, "Do you know that there are such things as women spies, and we shoot them? Come, come, speak out, you are not a gipsy; what country woman are you?"

She continued to gaze upon him, as though she still did not understand him.

The sergeant repeated, "To what country do you belong?"

"I do not know," replied she.

"Eh, what, you do not know what country you belong to?"

"Oh! my country, yes, of course I do."

"Well, what is it then?"

The woman replied, "The farm of Siscoignard, in the Parish of Azé."

It was now the sergeant's turn to look surprised. For a moment or two he remained buried in thought, and then remarked, "Eh, what is it that you say?"

"Siscoignard."

"But that isn't a country."

"It is my country."

The woman appeared to reflect for a few moments, and then added,

"I understand, sir. You belong to France, and I to Brittany."

"Very well."

"But it isn't the same thing, at all."

"Why, it is the same country," said the sergeant.

The woman contented herself with replying, "I come from Siscoignard."

"All right, let it be Siscoignard, then," returned the sergeant.

"And your family live there?"

"Yes."

"What is their business?"

"They are all dead; I have not a soul belonging to me."

The sergeant, who was proud of his oratory, continued to question her. "Eh, the devil though! one either has relations, or one has had some; who are you?" The woman listened to him dumb-foundered; the words "*or one has had some*" sounded more like the roar of a wild animal than a human voice.

The vivandière now felt it necessary to interpose. She began again to fondle the child at the breast, and playfully patted the cheeks of the two others.

"What is the name of the little one?" asked she. "It is a girl, is it not?"

The mother replied, "Georgette."

"And the eldest?"

"Réné-Jean."

"And the younger one,—he is a man, too, and plump besides?"

"Gros-Alain," said the mother.

"They are pretty children," continued the vivandière, "and have the air of not being common children."

But the sergeant persisted in his interrogations.

"Tell me now, Madame, have you a home?"

"I had one."

"Where was it?"

"At Azé."

"Why are you not at home then?"

"Because they burnt it."

"Who did so?"

"I don't know, there was a battle."

"Where have you come from?"

"From there."

"Where are you going to?"

"I do not know."

"Come to the point, who are you?"

"I do not know."

"Not know who you are?"

"We are people who are running away."

"On whose side are you?"

"I do not know."

"Are you for the *Blues*, or for the *Whites?* Who are you with?"

"I am with my children."

There was a short silence, broken by the vivandière.

"I never had any children," said she; "I had no time."

The sergeant again began his questions.

"But your relations, Madame; tell me about your relations. For my part, I am called Radoub, I am a sergeant, and come from the Rue Cherche Midi, my father and my mother lived there. You see I can speak of my relations,—tell me about yours; what do they do? How do they live, these same Fléchards?"

"They were labourers; my father was crippled, and could do no work, because he had been so beaten. The lord, our lord, had had him beaten, which was an act of kindness on his part, for my father had snared a rabbit, and for that they could have hung him, but the lord granted him mercy, saying, 'Only give him a hundred blows with a stick,' and that is how he became a cripple."

"Well, what happened after that?"

"My grandfather was a Protestant, and the priest had him sent to the galleys; I was quite a little thing then."

"Well, after that?"

"My husband's father was a smuggler of salt,—they had him hung; the king ordered that."

"And your husband, what did he do?"
"In those days he fought."
"For whom did he fight?"
"For the King."
"And then?"
"Gracious me, for his lord!"
"And then?"
"Well, then for the priest."
"A thousand names of wild beasts," said a grenadier.

The woman gave a start of terror.

"You see, Madame," said the vivandière patronizingly, "that we are from Paris."

The woman clasped her hands, exclaiming, "Oh, blessed Lord Jesus!"

"No superstitious mummeries here," exclaimed the sergeant.

The vivandière sat down by the side of the woman, and drew the eldest of the children on to her knees; the boy made no resistance. Children show confidence, as they show fear, without giving a reason for either. They have some inward monitor that tells them what to do. "My poor good woman of these parts, you have three very pretty brats, children generally are pretty. I can nearly guess their ages; the biggest one is four, and his brother three, the mite at the breast is a real glutton—ah! you little monster, will you stop eating up your mother? Look here, Madame, don't you be frightened. You ought to join the regiment. You should do as I do. I am called Houzarde; it is a nickname, but I had much sooner be called Houzarde, than Mademoiselle Bicorneau, like my mother. I am the canteen woman, as they call her, who serves the drink when they are shooting and marching when the devil and his band are at work. Our feet are nearly the same size; I will give you a pair of my shoes. Do you know that I have given Westermann a drink? How matters went then! I saw Louis XVI. guillotined,—the one they called Louis Capet. He was against it; goodness gracious, just listen to me! Fancy, on the 13th of January he was roasting chestnuts, and laughing with his family! When they stretched him out on the swinging platform, by main force, he had no coat or shoes on, only his shirt, a quilted waistcoat, grey cloth breeches, and grey silk stockings. I, myself, saw all that. The coach in which they brought him was painted green. Look you, join us, we are all good fellows in the regiment; you shall be canteen woman No. 2. I will teach you the business. It is all very simple. You have your little barrel and your bell, and out you go into the uproar, with the fire of musketry, amongst the cannon balls, into the middle of all the hurly-burly, crying out, 'Which of you wants a drink, my boys?' There is nothing very difficult in all that. I pour out drink for every one, yes, I do that; to the *Whites*, as well as to the *Blues*, although I am a blue, yes, and a thoroughgoing blue too. But I give drink to all; wounded men are very thirsty. They die without any regard to difference of opinion. People who are on the point of death should shake hands. Fighting is a silly thing. Come with us. You shall have all my support, and if I am killed you shall have my place. Perhaps you don't like my appearance, but I am a good woman for all that, and have as much pluck as a man, so don't you be afraid."

When the vivandière had ceased talking the other woman murmured, "The woman who lived next to us was named Marie-Jeanne, and our servant was called Marie-Claude."

During this conversation the sergeant Radoub reprimanded the grenadier who had last spoken.

"Can't you hold your tongue?" said he, "don't you see that you frighten Madame; you must not swear before ladies."

"Yes, but all the same it is regular murder, and too much for an honest man to listen to," answered the grenadier; "to hear these Iroquois from China talk about their fathers being made cripple by his lordship, their grandfathers sent to the galleys by his reverence, and their fathers-in-law hung by His Majesty, and then they fight, yes, name of the little good man,—they fight, and get themselves pounded to pieces for the lord, the priest, and the king!"

"Silence in the ranks," said the sergeant.

"All right, sergeant, I'm dumb," answered the grenadier; "but for all that, you must allow that it is hard that a

pretty woman should run the risk of getting her neck twisted for such ideas."

"Grenadier," replied the sergeant, "we want no oratory here; we are not at a meeting of a branch of the Pike Club." Then he turned towards the woman. "And your husband, Madame, what is he doing, what has become of him?"

"He is doing nothing, they have killed him."

"Where did they kill him?"

"In the hedgerow."

"How long ago was that?"

"Three days ago."

"Who did it?"

"I don't know."

"What! you don't know who killed your husband?"

"No."

"Was it a Blue, or was it a White?"

"It was a gunshot."

"And that was three days ago?"

"Yes."

"Whereabouts did it take place?"

"Towards Ernée, it was there that he fell,—that is all."

"And since your husband has been dead, what have you been doing?"

"I have been carrying the children about."

"Where were you carrying them to?"

"I don't know; straight ahead."

"And where have you been sleeping?"

"On the ground."

"And what have you been eating?"

"Nothing."

The sergeant made a grimace which drew up his moustache to his nose. "Nothing?" repeated he.

"That is to say, sloes, last year's dried berries, myrtle seeds, and fern shoots."

"Well, you can call that nothing, I think."

The eldest boy, who seemed to comprehend what was going on, now said, "I am hungry."

The sergeant took from his pocket a piece of ration bread, and handed it to the mother. She broke it into two pieces, and gave it to the boys, who devoured it greedily.

"She has kept nothing for herself," growled the sergeant.

"Perhaps that is because she is not hungry," remarked one of the soldiers.

"It is because she is a mother," said the sergeant.

The children interrupted this dialogue.

"I am thirsty," said one.

"Something to drink," said the other.

"Are there no brooks in these infernal woods?" asked the sergeant.

The vivandière took the copper cup that hung from her belt by the side of the little handbell, and turned the tap of the canteen which was slung over her shoulder, and letting a few drops fall into the cup, gave it to the children.

One drank it, and made a face.

The other tasted it, and spat it out.

"It is good stuff for all that," said the vivandière.

"Is it some of the old *burn-your-gullet?*" asked the sergeant.

"Yes, and the best of its kind, but they are only peasants after all," and as she spoke she wiped the cup.

The sergeant continued his examination.

"And so, Madame, you took to flight?"

"It was necessary to do so."

"Across the fields, as hard as you could?"

"I ran with all my might, then I began to walk, and at last I fell down."

"Poor yokel," said the vivandière.

"People were fighting all about us," stammered the woman. "There were musket shots on every side. I don't know what they wanted,—they killed my husband, and that was all that I could understand."

The sergeant struck the butt of his musket heavily upon the ground. "What a beast of a war! I say it is an ass's business."

The woman went on,—"Last night we slept in an *émousse*."

"What? all four of you?"

"All four of us."

"You slept there?"

"We slept there."

"Then you must have slept standing up!" answered the sergeant, then turning to the men, he said, "Comrades, an old hollow tree that has been dead for ages, into which a man can stow himself away like a blade in a scabbard, is what these savages call an *émousse*. But what can you expect of them; every one cannot come from Paris, eh?"

"She has had to sleep in a hollow tree," said the vivandière, "and with three children?"

"Yes," answered the sergeant, "and when the little ones cried out it must have been strange for those passing by to hear a tree call out *Papa! Mama!* and yet to see nothing."

"Fortunately it is summer," sighed the woman. She cast her eyes upon the ground, and remained crushed down with all the stupefaction of musing. In silence the soldiers formed a group around this picture of wretchedness.

A widow, three orphans, flight, desertion, solitude, the roar of war awakening the echoes of the distant horizon, hunger and thirst, no other sustenance but the grass, no other shelter but the canopy of heaven.

The sergeant came nearer to the woman, and fixed his eyes upon the child she carried on her breast. The baby, moving its head, turned its blue eyes towards the tanned and wrinkled face of the man half hidden in hair, and smiled.

The sergeant drew himself up, and a big tear could be seen rolling down his cheek, and clinging to the end of his moustache like a pearl; then he spoke. "Comrades," cried he, "from what I see the regiment is about to become a father. Do you all agree? Shall we adopt these three children?"

"Long live the Republic!" shouted the grenadiers.

"Carried unanimously," said the sergeant. Then he stretched his hand over the mother and the children.

"Here," exclaimed he, "is the family of the Regiment of the Red Caps."

The vivandière jumped for joy. "Three heads in one cap!" cried she.

Then she burst into hysterical sobs, and embraced the woman frantically.

"What a little rogue the girl looks already!" exclaimed she.

"Long live the Republic!" repeated the soldiers, and then the sergeant, turning to the mother of the children, said, "Come along with us, citizeness."

BOOK II.

THE CORVETTE "CLAYMORE."

CHAPTER I.

THE ALLIANCE OF ENGLAND AND FRANCE.

In the spring of 1793, at the time when France had war on all its frontiers, shortly after the pathetic destruction caused by the fall of the party of the Girondists, this is what took place off the Channel Islands in the British Channel.

One evening, it was the 1st of June, in the lonely little Bay of Bonnenuit in the Island of Jersey, just about sunset in that foggy weather which is so convenient for flight, because pursuit is so difficult, a corvette was setting her sails. This vessel was manned by a French crew, but belonged to the British Fleet which had been ordered to cruise, as a squadron of observation, round the eastern end of the island. The Prince of Tour d'Auvergne of the House of Bouillon commanded the English squadron, and it was by his orders, and for a special and urgent service, that the corvette had been detached.

This corvette had been entered in the records of the Trinity House under the name of the *Claymore;* she looked like a merchantman, but was in reality a ship of war; she had all the heavy and clumsy appearances of a trader, but it would not have done in this case to have put too much faith in appearances. She had been built with two ends in view, and was a mixture of strength and cunning, so as to deceive as long as it was practicable, and when that was no longer possible, to fight. For the work that she had to do that night—the lading of the lower deck—had been replaced by thirty carronades of heavy metal. These thirty carronades—

whether the commander of the *Claymore* had foreseen a storm, or perhaps to avoid all appearances which might provoke suspicion—had been drawn on board, and were securely fastened with threefold chains, and the hatches so carefully battened down that from outside nothing could be seen. The ports were all closed, and the deadlights shipped, so that it was as if the corvette had put on a mask. The carronades had bronze wheels with spokes to them according to the old pattern, termed the "radiated pattern." As a rule, corvettes only have guns on deck, but this one, which was constructed for strategy and surprise, had its deck perfectly clear, but was able to have its armament on the lower deck. The *Claymore* was bluff and rather Dutch built, but for all that was a good sailing vessel, and had as stout a hull as was to be found in the English navy, and could have held her own with any frigate, though she had but the small mizen-mast of a brigantine; the helm was of a new form, a modern invention, with a curved frame, which had cost fifty pounds sterling in the woodyards of Southampton. The crew, which was entirely French, was composed of officers who had emigrated, and sailors who had deserted. These were all tried men, and not one of them but was a good sailor, a good soldier, and a good royalist. They possessed the three points of fanaticism, the navy, the sword, and the king. Half a regiment of marines, which could be landed if necessary, had been embarked on board the vessel.

The captain of the *Claymore* was a knight of Saint Louis, the Count of Boisberthelot, one of the most distinguished officers of the late Royal Navy, the second in command was the Chevalier de la Vieuville, who had formerly commanded that company of the French Guards in which Hoche had been a sergeant, whilst for pilot they had the most experienced seaman in Jersey—Gacquoil. As may be surmised, this corvette was destined for no ordinary tour of duty. In fact, a man who had just embarked had all the air of a hero of some adventure. He was a tall old man, powerfully built and straight as a dart; his face had a severe look upon it, and it would have been difficult to hit upon his exact age, for he had an expression in which both youth and age appeared to mingle,—one of those men full of years and strength who have white hair, but eyes full of light; who, as far as physical force goes, might be forty, but are eighty in wisdom and experience. When he made his appearance on the deck of the corvette, the opening of his mantle showed that beneath it he wore loose breeches, and the gaiter boots called in Breton *bragoubras*, a goat-skin vest, one side of which was covered with the rough hair whilst the other was adorned with silk embroidery, the complete costume, in short, of the Breton peasant. These old-fashioned garments served two purposes, and were suited both for holidays and days of toil, as they could be reversed, and the hairy or the embroidered sides could be exposed as desired; the skin of the beast for every-day wear, and the gala dress for the Sabbath.

The peasant's dress which the old man wore was, as if to carry out some resemblance which had been sought after and desired, rubbed and frayed at the knees and elbows, and seemed to have been in wear for some time. The boat cloak in which he was enveloped was of some coarse stuff, and seemed the discarded garment of some fisherman. He wore on his head the round hat of the period, with a high crown and broad brim, which, when turned down, gave the wearer a countrified look, but had a military appearance when looped up with cord and cockade.

The old man had the brim turned down like a peasant, without either cord or cockade.

Lord Balcarres, the Governor of the island, and the Prince of Tour d'Auvergne, had personally installed him on board. The secret agent of the princes, Gélambre, who had formerly been one of the bodyguard of Mons. Le Comte d'Artois, had himself superintended the arrangement of his cabin, carrying his respect so far as to bear behind him his portmanteau, though a gentleman of birth and position. Upon leaving him to return to land, Mons. de Gélambre had made the peasant a most respectful bow; Lord Balcarres had said, "*Good luck, general;*"

and the Prince of Tour d'Auvergne had exclaimed, "*To the pleasure of seeing you again, my cousin.*"

"*The peasant*"—for this was the name under which all the crew spoke of their passenger in the short conversations which pass between mariners—was, it was well understood, no more a peasant than the corvette was a merchantman.

There was very little wind. The *Claymore* left Bonnenuit, passed the mouth of Boulay Bay, and, after making several tacks to windward, remained in sight of land for some time, then she glided into the coming night, and soon disappeared entirely from view. One hour afterwards Gélambre sent from his house at Saint Helier an express messenger to Southampton, bearing a letter addressed to Mons Le Comte d'Artois, at the headquarters of the Duke of York, containing these few lines:—

"YOUR HIGHNESS,—The departure has taken place. Success is certain. In eight days the fire will spread along the whole coast from Granville to Saint Malo."

Four days previous, Prieur, who represented La Marne, and who was on duty with the army on the coast near Cherbourg, received by a secret emissary at Granville, where he was temporarily residing, a letter in the same handwriting as the former dispatch, the contents of which were as follows:—

"CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVE,—On the 1st of June, at full tide, the corvette *Claymore*, with the armament concealed, will sail, to put ashore on the coast of France a man, of which the following is the description:—Tall, old, white hair, dressed as a peasant, delicate hands. To-morrow I will send you fuller details. He will land on the morning of the 2nd. Warn the cruiser, capture the corvette, guillotine the man."

CHAPTER II.

NIGHT ON THE VESSEL, AND WITH THE PASSENGER.

THE corvette, instead of steering south, and making for Saint Catherine, directed her course to the north, then, turning to the west, boldly entered the Channel between Sark and Jersey, which is called the Passage de la Déroute. At that time there were no lighthouses on either of the coasts. The sun had set some time, the night was dark, darker, indeed, than ordinary in summer. There was a moon, but vast clouds, looking more like those of the equinox than the solstice, covered the heavens, and there was every appearance of the moon not being visible until it touched the horizon at the moment of setting. A few clouds hung low, almost touching the waves, and formed a species of fog.

All this obscurity was favourable.

The intention of the pilot Gacquoil was to leave Jersey on the left and Guernsey on the right, and by a bold dash between the Hanois and the Douvres Rocks, to gain a bay on the coast near Saint Malo—not so short a route as that by the Minquières, but more sure—as the French cruiser had standing orders to keep watch between Saint Helier and Granville.

If the wind served, and if nothing intervened, by spreading every stitch of canvas Gacquoil hoped to reach the coast of France with the first peep of dawn.

All went well, the corvette had passed Gros Nez; at about nine o'clock the weather began to look dirty, as sailors say, and there was both wind and sea on, but the wind was favourable, and the sea, though rough, was not violent; but occasionally a wave broke over the bows of the corvette.

"The peasant," whom Lord Balcarres had called "general," and whom the Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne had styled "My cousin," walked about the deck like a veritable sailor. He did not seem to notice that there was any motion at all. Every now and then he took a piece of chocolate from his pocket, and bit off a morsel. His white hair did not prevent his having a sound set of teeth. He spoke to no one with the exception of a few words to the captain, who listened to him with the greatest deference, and evidently looked upon him as more in command than himself.

The *Claymore*, skilfully steered, glided, without being perceived, owing to the fog, along the steep nothern coast of Jersey,

hugging the shore rather closely to escape the dreaded rock of Pierres-de-Leeq, which lies in the middle of the Channel between Jersey and Sark.

Gacquoil, from his station at the helm, signalled in turn the different reefs, La Grêve de Leeq, Gros Nez, Plémont, and edged the corvette through the chain of rocks and breakers, as though he was feeling his way, but yet with a certain amount of knowledge, like a man who is intimately acquainted with the ocean, its homes, and its dwellers. The corvette had no light 'forrard' for fear of its affording a means of detection in these well-watched seas. Every one congratulated themselves on the fog.

When they reached Brume Étape the mist was so dense that the tall elevation of the pinnacle could hardly be seen. They heard the clock of Saint Ouen strike ten, a proof that the wind was still astern. All went well, but the sea grew a little more rough as they came nearer to the Corbière.

A little after ten o'clock, the Count Boisberthelot and the Chevalier de Vieuville conducted the man in the peasant's dress to his cabin, which was in reality the state room of the captain. Just as he was entering he raised his voice, and said, "You know, gentlemen, the magnitude of the secret with which you have been entrusted. Silence until the moment of the explosion. You alone of all here are acquainted with my name."

"We will carry it with us to the tomb," said Boisberthelot.

"As for me," returned the old man, "were I face to face with death, I would not divulge it," and with these words he entered the state room.

CHAPTER III.

ARISTOCRAT AND PLEBEIAN ALLIED.

THE commandant and his first officer returned to the deck, and began walking up and down conversing together. They were talking of their strange passenger, and this was what they said, heard at intervals as the wind brought the words through the darkness.

Boisberthelot half whispered in the ear of La Vieuville,

"We shall see if he is fit to be a chief."

La Vieuville answered,

"At present he is a prince."

"Almost."

"A nobleman in France, but a prince in Brittany."

"Like the Tremouilles,—like the Rohans."

"With whom he is connected."

Boisberthelot continued,

"So, for want of a French prince, they take a Breton one."

"If there are no thrushes—no, if there are no eagles, we take a crow."

"I would rather have a vulture," said Boisberthelot.

La Vieuville answered,

"Well, he certainly has a beak and claws."

"We shall see."

"Yes," continued La Vieuville, "it is time that there should be a chief; I am of Tinteniac's opinion—*a chief and ammunition!* Look you here, Commander,—I know nearly all the chiefs, possible and impossible, those of yesterday, those of to-day, and those of to-morrow, and there is not one with a head for war such as we want. In that infernal county of La Vendée a man must be a general and a lawyer at one and the same time; he must know how to weary out the enemy, to dispute with him every mile, bush, ditch, and pebble; to quarrel with him on the most unreasonable pretexts; to take advantage of every opportunity, to keep a strict watch, to slaughter pitilessly, to make examples everywhere, never to sleep, to be utterly merciless. Just now amongst that peasant army there are many heroes, but not a single leader. D'Elbée is of no use; Lescure is sick; Bonchamps has some feelings of mercy, he is kind, and therefore stupid; La Rochejaquelin is a splendid subordinate officer; Silz is an officer for the open country, entirely unfitted for a makeshift warfare; Cathelineau is a simple carter; Stofflet is a cunning gamekeeper; Bérard is thoroughly unfit; Boulainvilliers is ridiculous; Charette is disgusting. I say nothing of Gaston the barber, for by my soul! what good is there in wrangling with the Revolution, and

what difference would there be between the Republicans and ourselves, if we permitted the wigmakers to command the gentlemen?"

"This vile beast of a Revolution is making head against us."

"It is a mange that France has got."

"The mange of the third estate; England alone can cure us of it," returned Boisberthelot.

"And she will effect a cure, do not doubt it, captain."

"But in the meantime matters look ugly."

"Yes, we have clowns everywhere. The monarchy, which has for its Commander-in-chief Stofflet, the gamekeeper of Mons. de Maulevrier, cannot afford to sneer at the Republic whose Minister is Pache, the son of the doorkeeper of the Duke de Castries. In this Vendean war what strange men are opposed to each other,—on the one side Santerre the brewer, and on the other Gaston the hairdresser."

"But, my dear La Vieuville, I make an exception in the case of this Gaston, for he has not behaved so badly, whilst in command at Guémenée, where he shot three hundred of the *Blues*, after making them dig their own graves."

"That was good, but I could have done as well myself."

"And I, too, by my faith."

"Grand strokes in war must be achieved by noblemen,—such deeds are for knights, not for hairdressers."

"But yet there are some amongst that class that have not done badly. Take, for example, the clockmaker Joly. He had been a sergeant in the Regiment of Flanders, and became one of the Vendean chiefs. He commanded one of the bands on the coast. He had a son who was a Republican, and whilst the father served in the *Whites*, the son was in the ranks of the *Blues*. Well, there was a meeting, an action. The father made the son prisoner, and blew out his brains."

"That was good," said La Vieuville.

"A royalist Brutus," remarked Boisberthelot.

"Yes, but all that does not make it less hard to be commanded by a Cocquereau, a Jean Jean, a Moulin, a Focart, a Bougin, or a Chouppes."

"My dear chevalier, the feeling is the same on the other side. Our ranks are full of plebeians, theirs of aristocrats. Do you think that the Republicans like to be commanded by the Count de Canclaux, the Viscount of Miranda, the Viscount of Beauharnais, the Count de Valence, the Marquis de Custine, or the Duke de Biron?"

"What a mixture!"

"And the Duke de Chartres?"

"What! the son of Egalité? When does he expect to be king?"

"Never."

"He is trying to climb to the throne; he has the assistance of his crimes."

"Yes, but he is hampered by his vices," returned Boisberthelot.

There was a short silence, and then Boisberthelot continued.

"He was, however, anxious for a reconciliation, he paid a visit to the King at Versailles; I was there when some one spat upon his back."

"From the top of the grand staircase, was it not?"

"Yes."

"Whoever it was did well."

"We used to call him Bourbon the Bourbeux."

"He is bald, covered with pimples, and a regicide, pah!" and La Vieuville added, "I was at Quessant with him."

"On board the *Saint Esprit?*"

"Yes."

"If he had obeyed the signal which Admiral d'Orvilliers made to him, to keep to windward, he would have prevented the English from passing."

"Certainly he would."

"Was it true that he was hiding himself in the run of the vessel?"

"No, but we must say so all the same." La Vieuville burst into a fit of laughter, and Boisberthelot continued.

"Some people are such fools. Now there is that Boulainvilliers, of whom you have been speaking,—I know him, I have spoken to him. In the beginning of the war the peasants were armed with pikes, and he absolutely wanted to make trained pikemen of them, to teach them to *trail pikes*, *handle pikes*, *advance pikes*. He

really dreamed of turning these savages into soldiers of the line; he pretended to teach them to form *column of companies*, and to throw themselves into *square*. He puzzled them with all the old-fashioned military terms; he called the leader of a party a *cap d'escade!* which was the name by which corporals were known in the days of Louis XIV. He tried to raise a regiment of poachers. He had regular companies, the sergeants of which formed a circle every evening, receiving the parole and countersign from the colonel's orderly sergeant, who whispered it to the orderly sergeant of the lieutenant, who told it to the one next to him, who passed it on to his neighbour. He broke an officer who did not remove his hat to receive the watchword from the sergeant. You can imagine how well all this succeeded. This blockhead could not understand that peasants must be treated like peasants, and that you can't change men of the woods into men of the barracks. Yes, I knew this Boulainvilliers well."

They walked for some time in silence, each buried in his own thoughts.

Then the conversation began afresh. "By the way, has the news of Dampierre's death been confirmed?"

"Yes, commander."

"Before Condé?"

"At the camp of Pamars, by a cannon ball."

Boisberthelot heaved a sigh. "The Count de Dampierre!" said he; "another from our side who joined them."

"A safe journey to him," remarked La Vieuville.

"And the Princesses, where are they?"

"At Trieste."

"Still there?"

"Still there."

Then La Vieuville exclaimed, "Ah, this Republic! what miseries have arisen from so little! When one thinks that the Revolution was caused for the want of a few millions!"

"Distrust all trivial causes," said Boisberthelot.

"Everything goes ill," continued La Vieuville.

"Yes, La Rouarie is dead, Du Dresnay is an idiot; what wretched leaders all these Bishops have proved themselves,—Concy, Bishop of La Rochelle, Beaupail Saint Aulaise, Bishop of Poitiers, Mercy, Bishop of Luçon, who was the lover of Madame de l'Eschassiere."

"Whose real name was Servanléau, for l'Eschassiere was derived from the name of an estate. You remember that, do you not, commander?"

"And that sham bishop of Agra, who was priest of I do not know where."

"Of Dol; he called himself Giullot de Folleville, but he had courage for all that, and fought well."

"Priests where soldiers are wanted, bishops who are not bishops, generals who are not generals," La Vieuville interrupted Boisberthelot.

"Commander, you have the last copy of the *Moniteur* in your state room, have you not?"

"Yes."

"What are they playing in Paris just now?"

"*Adèle and Pantin*, and *The Cavern*."

"I should like to see that."

"You shall see it; we shall be in Paris in a month;" Boisberthelot reflected for a moment, and then added,—"at the very latest. Monsieur Windham said so to Lord Hood."

"But in that case, commander, things are not going so badly."

"All will go well, on my word, if the war in Brittany were only carried on in a proper manner."

La Vieuville nodded his head. "Commander," asked he, "shall we disembark the marines?"

"Yes, if the coast is in the hands of our friends and not in those of our enemies. Sometimes, in making war, we must demolish the gates, at other times we must slip through them. In civil war we should always carry a skeleton key in our pockets. We will do all that we can, but what is most wanted is a really capable chief."

Boisberthelot added in a thoughtful manner, "La Vieuville, what do you think of the Chevalier de Dieuzie?"

"The younger one, you mean?"

"Yes."

"What, as a commander?"

"Yes."

"That he is only fit for fighting in the

open country, and in pitched battles. It is only the peasant that understands bush-fighting."

"Then you must resign yourselves to Generals Stofflet and Cathelineau."

La Vieuville thought for a few moments, and then remarked, "We must have a prince, a prince of the blood, a veritable prince, in fact."

"Why, he who says prince ——"

"Says coward, I know that, commander. But a name like that is needed to impress the louts that are to serve under it."

"But, my dear chevalier, the difficulty is to catch your princes."

"We can't do without them."

Boisberthelot struck his forehead sharply with his hand, as though to elicit an idea, and then recommenced.

"Well, we will just see what this new general will do for us."

"He is of high descent."

"Do you think that we can depend on him?"

"So that he is firm enough."

"If he is pitiless enough."

The Count and the Chevalier looked into each other's eyes.

"Monsieur de Boisberthelot, you have hit upon the idea exactly—'*pitiless*,' yes, that is what is required; this is a war without mercy on either side, and victory will remain with the most bloodthirsty. The regicides have decapitated Louis XVI., —we will quarter the regicides. Yes, yes, the general that we want is General Inexorable. In Anjou, and the upper portion of Poitou, the chiefs affect a certain amount of magnanimity; they dip their fingers, as it were, into generosity, but it does not go down. In the Marais, and in the country of De Retz, the leaders are bloodthirsty savages, and then all goes on well. It is because Charette is so ferocious that he holds his own with Parrier; it is a case of hyæna against hyæna."

Boisberthelot had not the time to make any answer to Vieuville, for the words that he was about to utter were cut short by a cry of despair, and at the same time an awful crash, such as seldom strikes upon the ear, was heard. This cry and this crash came from the interior of the vessel.

The captain and the lieutenant rushed to the companion ladder leading to the lower deck, but were unable to descend, owing to the upward rush of frightened gunners and seamen.

Something very terrible had just taken place.

CHAPTER IV.

TORMENTUM BELLI.

One of the carronades, a twenty-four pounder, had broken loose from its lashings.

This is perhaps one of the most terrible mishaps that can happen on board a man-of-war when it is in full sail in the open sea.

When a gun breaks away from its lashings, it becomes, to a certain extent, an indescribably supernatural animal. It is a machine which has the power of transforming itself into a monster.

This enormous mass darts about on its wheels, and runs like a billiard ball on a table, rolls as the vessel rolls, pitches as it pitches, stands stock still, and appears to meditate its next movement, resumes its mad rushes again, flies like an arrow from one end of the vessel to another, turns on its centre, conceals itself, escapes its pursuers, rears on end, crashes, smashes, kills, and massacres all around it. It is a battering-ram that strikes the wall according to its own fantasy, and to this add, that in this case the battering-ram is of iron and the wall of wood. It is a brute matter set at liberty—it seems as if the slave of the ages were taking its revenge.

It appears as if all the hidden wickedness that lies concealed in what we term inanimate objects has burst forth, and freed itself from all restraint. It seems to have passed the bounds of patience, and to be taking a weird kind of revenge.

The rabid mass makes springs like those of a panther, it possesses the enormous power of the elephant, the agility of the mouse, the quickness of the hatchet, the unforeseen rushes of the wave, the strokes of the lightning, and the deafness of the tomb. It weighs ten thousand pounds, and rebounds like the india-rubber ball of a child. The bewildering whirls

are abruptly cut off at right angles: and what can be done with it, how put an end to its movements? A storm sinks into a calm, a cyclone fades away, a wind dies by degrees, a broken mast can be replaced, a leak stopped, a fire burns itself out, but what can be done with this gigantic bronze creature? Which is the way to begin with it? You can cow a dog, paralyse a bull, fascinate a serpent, terrify a tiger, and soften the noble heart of a lion, but what can you do with such a monster as a gun that has broken away from its fastenings? You cannot kill it—for it is dead, whilst at the same time it lives. It lives with an illumined life that comes to it from the Infinite. The very planks upon which it rests give a spring to its movements. It is tossed about by the ship, which is in its turn shaken by the waves, which are stirred up by the winds. This Destroyer is, after all, but a mere plaything. The ship, the waves, the winds, all combine together to keep the terrible life in it. What is to be done with so fearful an alliance? How throw out of gear this monstrous machinery for causing shipwreck? How can man foresee its rushes here, its rushes there, its rapid whirls, its sudden halts, and terrible shocks? Any one of those frightful blows might stave in a plank in the vessel's side. How is it possible to guess at the direction of its strange and wonderful evolutions? You have to do with a projectile which changes its mind as to its destination, which seems to have ideas of its own, and every moment to move towards some fresh point! How can you arrest the object which it is necessary for you to avoid?

The terrible cannon flings itself hither and thither, advances, retreats, deals blows to the right, strikes on the left, grinds every obstacle to powder, and crushes men like flies. The great danger of the affair consists in the elasticity of the planking. How struggle with an inclined plane which is full of whims? It seemed as though the ship held in its inmost recesses a thunderbolt which was vainly striving to break its way forth—something like the thunder growling above the earthquake.

In a moment the whole of the crew were on the scene of the accident. A gunner had caused all the mischief by neglecting to secure the nut of the chain which composed the lashing, and by not properly blocking the four wheels, so that the play given to the sole and frame had torn it from the platform, and ended by breaking the breeching. The cordage had snapped, so that the gun was no longer secure on its carriage. The fixed breeching which deadens the recoil was not in use at that time. As a heavy sea struck the port, the carronade, badly lashed, had slipped back, and, bursting its chain, had commenced flying hither and thither between decks.

To give an idea of its eccentric movements imagine a drop of rain sliding down a pane of glass. At the moment when the chain broke the men were seated on the gun deck, some in groups, others alone, engaged in those various odd jobs which sailors always seem to find to do before going into action. The gun, impelled by the motion of the vessel, dashed into the nearest group, and crushed four men to death instantly; then, hurled backwards, and flung forwards again by a sudden roll, it cut a fifth miserable wretch in two, glanced off to the port side, and dismounted one of the guns there.

Then rose the cry of distress that had been heard. All the crew struggled to the companion ladder, and the lower deck was deserted in the twinkling of an eye.

The huge cannon had been left alone. She was given up to herself. She was mistress of herself, and mistress of the vessel. She could do whatever she liked. Accustomed to smile even in the heat of action, all the crew trembled. To describe the feeling of dread that crept over all would be impossible.

Captain Boisberthelot, and Lieutenant La Vieuville, courageous men as they both were, halted at the top of the ladder, mute, pale, and hesitating, gazing into the depth below; as they did so, some one elbowed his way past them, and descended to the lower deck.

It was the passenger, the peasant, the man of whom they had just been speaking.

On reaching the bottom of the ladder he stood motionless.

CHAPTER V.

STRENGTH AND THE MAN.

THE gun flew backwards and forwards on the deck. One might have fancied it to be the living image of the Chariot of the Apocalypse. A ship's lantern swinging from the beams above gave a strange mixture of light and shade to this appalling sight. In the rapidity of its course the cannon sometimes disappeared entirely, now it looked black in the faint light, and again cast ghastly gleams through the obscurity.

It continued the destruction of the vessel. It had already dismounted four other pieces of cannon, and burst through the outer skin of the vessel in two places, happily above the waterline, but through which the water would certainly enter should a squall come on. It rushed with madness against the planking, which, strengthened with heavy cross-pieces, resisted it, their curved shape giving them greater solidity, but they groaned and quivered beneath the blows of this terrible mace, which seemed inspired with a spirit of ubiquity, and struck on all sides at once. A pellet of shot shaken about in a bottle would not give more frequent or more frenzied blows. The four wheels passed and repassed over the four men, cutting them in pieces, quartering them, and slashing them out of all semblance to humanity, and each corpse, divided into twenty pieces, rolled hither and thither with every pitch of the vessel. Streams of blood ran along the planking as the ship rolled. The upper planking, battered in various places, began to open out, and the whole vessel was filled with the hoarse roar of destruction.

The captain had recovered his coolness with great promptitude, and by his orders they had thrown through the hatchway on to the lower deck everything that might soften and arrest the headlong course of the gun, — mattresses, hammocks, spare sails, coils of ropes, the sailors' bags, bales of false *assignats*, of which the corvette was carrying a large quantity,—an infamous trick which the English nation considered an honourable way of making war.

But of what avail were these rags? No one dared to descend and place them in their proper position, and in a few minutes they were reduced to mere masses of lint.

There was just sufficient sea on to make the accident terribly complete. A storm would have been more desirable, as it might have entirely overthrown the gun, which, with its four wheels in the air, could have been easily mastered. But the work of destruction was going on worse than ever; there were large pieces cut out of the masts which, like huge round pillars, traversed the different decks of the vessel. Under the convulsive blows of the cannon the mizen mast was cracked, and the mainmast itself injured. The armament of the corvette was being gradually destroyed; out of the thirty, ten guns were rendered useless; more crevices opened in the sides, and the ship began to leak.

The old passenger who had descended to the lower deck stood like a figure of marble at the bottom of the ladder, looking with a severe eye upon the scene of destruction. He remained motionless. It seemed impossible to take a step forward on the gun deck.

Each bound that the carronade, which was now at perfect liberty, made threatened the utter destruction of the ship,—a few minutes more, and nothing could save her from total wreck. It was necessary to take some decisive step, and to cut short the work of destruction, but how was this to be effected?

What sort of a combatant was this cannon?

It was necessary to arrest the course of this terrible mad creature.

It was necessary to snare this flash of lightning. It was necessary to hurl this thunderbolt to the ground.

Boisberthelot said to La Vieuville,

"Do you believe in God, Chevalier?"

La Vieuville answered,

"No—that is to say, yes—sometimes."

"In the storm, eh?"

"Yes, and in moments like this."

"In fact, no one but God can save us now," said Boisberthelot.

Every one was silent, allowing the carronade to keep up its horrible din.

Outside the surges beat against the vessel, drowning the blows of the cannon

by the blows of the waves. It was like the hammers of two smiths striking alternate strokes.

All at once, in that unapproachable circle in which the liberated cannon continued its mad gambols, a man appeared with a long bar of iron in his hand.

He was the author of the whole catastrophe, the captain of the gun, guilty of that negligence that had led to such terrible results,—the nominal master of the carronade.

Having done the evil, he wanted to repair it. He had grasped a handspike in one hand, and a rope with a slip-noose with the other, and jumped boldly down into the gun deck, through one of the hatchways.

Then a terrible thing began; a Titanic drama,—the strife of the gun against the gunner, the combat of matter against mind, the duel of the lifeless and the living.

The man had taken up his position at an angle, his handspike and cord stretched out ready; supported by one of the timbers, firm on his legs, which were rigid as two pillars of steel, pale; calm, and determined,—as though rooted to the planking he stood awaiting the onset.

He waited for the gun to pass close by him.

The gunner knew his piece, and it seemed as if it ought to know him too; he had lived in its company for a long time. How often had he thrust his hand down its yawning muzzle! It was his familiar monster, and he began to speak to it as if it were a dog.

"Come to me," said he; perhaps he loved it.

He seemed to wish that it would turn in his direction, but should it do so, he would be lost. How could he avoid its crushing weight? That was the question. All gazed on the scene with eyes of terror.

Not a breast respired freely, except perhaps that of the old man who was alone below with the two combatants—an impassible second.

He himself ran the chance of being crushed by the piece, and yet he never stirred.

Beneath them the sea, an invisible power, directed the combat.

At the instant when the gunner accepted this terrible hand-to-hand encounter, a lull in the motion of the vessel brought the cannon to a standstill, as though stupefied. "Come here," cried he. It seemed as if it heard him.

Suddenly it leapt at him; the man avoided the shock.

The struggle now commenced,—such a struggle as had never before been heard of. The fragile opposing itself to the invulnerable. A creature of flesh and blood attacking a brazen monster. On one side was mind, on the other brute force. All this scene passed in a sort of twilight; it was like some miraculous event indistinctly seen.

A mind—strange as it may seem, the cannon appeared to possess one also—a mind filled with rage and hatred. This blind mass appeared to be endued with sight. The monster had the appearance of watching for the man. It, too, waited its opportunity; you could hardly help believing that it was filled with the spirit of cunning. It resembled some gigantic iron insect inspired with the will of a demon. At an instant this colossal grasshopper would strike the low ceiling of the deck, then it would fall back on its four wheels like a tiger upon his four paws, and, recovering itself, rush upon the man. He, adroit and skilful, supple as a snake, would evade these rushes rapid as flashes of lightning; but the blows which he avoided fell on the vessel, and continued the work of destruction.

One end of the broken chain remained attached to the carronade. This chain was twisted in some extraordinary manner round the screw of the breech button of the gun. One end of the chain was fastened to the carriage, whilst the other, at perfect liberty, whirled frantically round the gun, and increased the danger of its strokes.

The screw grasped it like a clenched hand, and the chain supplemented the blows of the battering-ram with blows of a scourge. A perfect whirlwind,—a whip of iron wielded by a brazen hand. This chain complicated the combat greatly. And yet the man continued the fight. At times even it was the man that attacked the cannon. He crawled along the side of the vessel, his handspike and rope ready, and the gun seemed to understand him,

and fly from him as though avoiding a snare. The man, formidable from his reasoning powers, pursued it.

But such a contest could not last long. The gun seemed to say to itself, "Come, I must finish this," and remained quiescent. All felt that the end was at hand. The cannon, as though in doubt, seemed to have, or indeed had,—for to all it appeared to be endued with reasoning powers,—a ferocious premeditated design; it threw itself on the gunner.

He sprang on one side, and let it pass by him, crying out with a mocking laugh, "Try that again." The gun, as if furious, dashed to pieces a carronade on the port side, and then, as though launched by the invisible sling that directed its movements, it rushed upon the man who was standing at the starboard side.

The man evaded the attack.

Three more carronades yielded to the blows of the gun, then, as though blinded, and unconscious of what it was doing, it turned away from the man, and, rolling from the stern to the bow, injured the stern, and knocked a hole in the planking of the prow. The gunner had taken refuge at the foot of the ladder near to the old man, who was looking on. The gun appeared to perceive this, and without taking the trouble to turn round, rushed backwards upon the man with the rapidity of the blow of an axe.

The man, pinned against the side, seemed lost.

All the crew uttered a cry of terror.

But the old passenger, who up to this moment had seemed motionless, rushed forward with a celerity exceeding all the rapid rushes of the gun; he seized a bale of false *assignats*, and, at the risk of being crushed, succeeded in throwing it under the wheels of the carronade. This action, decisive, though full of peril, could not have been executed with more decision and promptitude by a man thoroughly trained to all the rules and regulations laid down in Durosel's work on the "Manœuvring of Great Guns at Sea."

The bale had the effect of a break,—a pebble may stop the descent of a mass of stone, a branch may turn the course of the avalanche. The carronade staggered. The gunner, taking advantage of this formidable assistance, plunged his handspike between the spokes of one of the hind wheels. The gun stopped. It rocked to and fro. The man, using the bar as a lever, shook it backwards and forwards. The enormous mass turned over with the clash of a falling bell, and the man, darting on it headlong, bathed in perspiration, passed the slip-knot round the neck of the bronze monster which he had succeeded in bringing to the ground.

It was all over. Man was the conqueror. The ant had defeated the Mastodon,—the pigmy had made captive the thunder.

The sailors and the marines clapped their hands for joy.

The crew rushed forward with chains and cables, and in an instant the gun was safely secured again.

The gunner saluted the passenger.

"Sir," said he, "you have saved my life."

The old man, who had resumed his calm immobility, made no reply.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TWO SCALES OF THE BALANCE.

THE man had conquered, but it could be said that the cannon had also won a victory. Immediate wreck had been avoided, but the corvette was not yet saved. The damage done to the vessel seemed irreparable. There were five breaches in her sides, one of which, in the bow, was a very large one. Twenty carronades out of the thirty lay useless on their carriages. The captured gun was also unserviceable, the screw of the breech button was twisted, and it was consequently impossible to take aim with it. The armament was reduced to nine pieces of artillery. The ship was leaking badly, and it was necessary to call all hands to repair damages, and to work the pumps.

The lower deck, now that they were able to examine it, was a terrible sight. The den of a mad elephant could not have offered a more frightful scene of dilapidation. Great as was the necessity that the corvette should escape observation, a still more imperious necessity ordained that instant steps should be taken for immediate

safety. It had, therefore, been found necessary to light up the decks by lanterns slung along the sides of them.

However, during all the time that this tragic episode had been taking place, the crew had been too much absorbed in the question of life or death, to see what was passing outside the vessel. The fog had grown more dense, the weather had changed, and the vessel had gone whither the winds had driven it. She was entirely out of her course, in full sight of Jersey and Guernsey, much further to the south than she ought to have been, and in the midst of a rising sea.

The great waves came and kissed the open wounds in the sides of the vessel, kisses that could not be too much dreaded. The movement of the sea was threatening. The breeze was becoming a gale, a tempest was no doubt brewing. It was impossible to see four oars' lengths before them.

Whilst the crew were hastily repairing the damage done to the lower deck, stopping the leaks, and getting the guns into position again which had escaped damage, the old passenger had ascended to the upper deck.

He was leaning against the mainmast. He had taken no notice of the operations that were going on in the vessel. The Chevalier La Vieuville had ranged the marines in two lines on each side of the mainmast, and at a whistle from the boatswain, the crew, who were occupied in the rigging, took up their position on the yards. The Count of Boisberthelot advanced towards the old passenger; behind him walked a man with haggard features, panting for breath, his dress torn and disordered, and yet with a smile of satisfaction on his face.

It was the gunner who had at the right moment displayed his skill as a tamer of monsters, and who had vanquished the rebellious cannon. The count saluted the old man clothed as a peasant in military fashion, and said,

"General, here is the man."

The gunner stood upright in the attitude of attention, his eyes fixed upon the ground.

The Count de Boisberthelot continued,

"General, considering the act performed by this man, do you not think that we, his superiors, should take some notice of the matter?"

"I think we should," replied the old man.

"Will you be good enough to give your orders then?" returned Boisberthelot.

"It is for you to give them, you are the captain."

"But you are the general," answered Boisberthelot.

The old man cast a keen glance on the gunner.

"Come near," said he.

The gunner advanced a step.

The old man, turning to the Count de Boisberthelot, took from his breast the Cross of Saint Louis, and fastened it on to the jacket of the gunner.

"Hurrah!" cried the sailors.

The marines presented arms.

Then the old passenger, pointing his finger at the astonished gunner, exclaimed,

"And now let them shoot this man!"

Applause gave way to surprise.

Then, in the midst of a sepulchral silence, the old man raised his voice, and said, "An act of negligence has compromised the safety of the vessel. At this moment perhaps we are lost. To be at sea, is to be in the presence of the enemy. A vessel on a voyage is like an army ready to give battle. The storm may not be visible, but it is not far away. The sea is an ambush. All faults committed in the presence of the enemy are punishable with death. No fault is reparable. Courage will be recompensed, and neglect punished."

The words fell from his lips one after the other slowly and sternly with a sort of inexorable cadence, like the blows of an axe upon an oak.

Then the old man, looking at the marines, added,

"Do your duty.

The man on whose breast the Cross of Saint Louis shone bent his head.

At a sign from the Count de Boisberthelot the marines descended to the lower deck and brought up a hammock. The chaplain of the vessel, who since its departure had been at prayer in the officers' cabin, accompanied the two sailors, a sergeant detailed twelve privates from the marines, and drew them up in a double

rank. The gunner without a word moved forward and placed himself between them. The chaplain with the crucifix raised in his hand took up his position near the prisoner.

The sergeant gave the word of command.

"March."

The firing party moved forward at a slow pace followed by two sailors carrying the hammock.

There was a melancholy silence all over the ship. In the distance the tempest moaned. A few moments afterwards a volley crashed through the gloom, there was a bright flash, then all was darkness and silence, and something fell into the sea with a heavy splash.

The old passenger, still leaning against the mainmast, crossed his arms, and appeared to be buried in thought.

Boisberthelot pointed him out with the forefinger of his left hand, and whispered to La Vieuville,

"La Vendée has found a leader at last."

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN YOU SET SAIL, YOU TAKE A CHANCE IN A LOTTERY.

But what was to be the fate of the corvette?

The clouds, which all night had been drooping over the waves, had finished by falling so low, that all signs of a horizon had vanished, and the sea was covered as with a huge mantle.

A heavy sea had joined the blinding fog. The crew had taken advantage of the time granted to them; they had lightened the corvette by throwing overboard all the material ruined by the carronade,—dismounted guns, shattered carriages, stays splintered and torn from the places where they had been nailed, broken pieces of wood and iron; they had opened the ports, and by means of planks slid into the sea the mutilated bodies enveloped in tarpaulin. The sea was now perfectly furious; not that the storm was at its height,—it seemed, indeed, on the contrary, that the hurricane which was growling beyond the distant horizon was decreasing, and the squall was moving away in a northerly direction. But the waves were of gigantic height, which showed that the sea had been stirred up to its lowest depths, and in the condition in which the corvette was it was unable to resist severe shocks, and the heavy seas might bring about a fatal catastrophe.

Gacquoil was at the helm plunged in a deep reverie. To keep a bold front in face of danger is a habit amongst those accustomed to the sea. La Vieuville, whose nature was gay even in the midst of trouble, accosted Gacquoil. "Well, pilot," said he, "the storm has flashed in the pan. Its desire to sneeze has not succeeded. We shall pull through after all. We shall have a capful of wind, and that will be all."

Gacquoil, with a serious air replied,

"He who has wind has sea too."

Neither exhilarated nor unduly cast down, such is the true sailor. The reply had a certain disquieting twang in it. When a ship is leaky a heavy sea will soon fill it. Gacquoil had emphasised his reply by a certain bending of the brows.

Perhaps, after the catastrophe of the gun and the gunner, La Vieuville had been premature in his light and jovial remarks. Certain words and actions bring ill luck when at sea. The ocean is of a sensitive disposition; we never know what she has in reserve, and we must take care what we say or do.

La Vieuville felt that he had been too sanguine.

"Where are we, pilot?" asked he.

The pilot answered, "We are in the hands of the Almighty."

When in charge the pilot is supreme; he is allowed to do as he likes, and often to say what he likes too. Besides, this kind of man does not often open his mouth. La Vieuville had asked the pilot a question, the horizon answered it for him.

All at once the sea suddenly grew lighter. The fog that hung over the waves parted, the dark obscurity of the waves changed into a dim half light, and this was the scene that presented itself. The sky was screened by a mass of clouds, but these clouds did not touch the sea; in the east there was a white line, this was the dawn; in the west quivered a corresponding pallor,

it was the setting of the moon. These two white spots formed two narrow bands of pale light opposite to one another, between the dark sea and the stormy sky.

Against these lines of light some black and motionless objects stood out sharply.

Towards the west, where the moon was sinking, were three lofty rocks rising from the sea like Celtic monuments.

In the east, where the faint dawn was breaking, were eight sails, arranged in order, and presenting a formidable appearance.

The three rocks were a dangerous reef, the eight sails a hostile squadron.

Behind the corvette were the Minquières, rocks of a most dangerous description; in front of them the cruisers of the Republic. To the west the danger of ocean; to the east the slaughter of war. The corvette lay between wreck and battle. To contend with the reef, the corvette had a hull pierced in several places, masts that were tottering to their lowest supports; to make head against the enemy, she had an armament of which twenty-one guns out of thirty were unserviceable, and the best of her gunners were dead.

The light was yet very feeble, and they had still a short space of darkness before them. This darkness might last longer than they calculated on, for the clouds on high were thick and dense, and had the appearance of a heavily-vaulted ceiling. The wind, which had dispersed the lower portion of the mist, was driving the corvette on to the Minquières.

In her disabled condition she did not answer her helm; she rolled heavily, and scarcely made any way, and, beaten by the waves, permitted them to take her where they desired. The Minquières, where many a tragic scene had taken place, were more dangerous then than they are now. Many of the towers of this Citadel of the Abyss have now fallen, owing to the incessant attacks of the waves. The shapes of reefs undergo many changes, and it is not in vain that the waves are called the Swords of the Sea. Each billow is like the stroke of a saw. At this period, to be driven on to the Minquières was inevitable death.

As for the cruisers, they belonged to the Squadron of Cancale, which afterwards became so celebrated under the command of Captain Duchesne, whom Lequinio nicknamed "Father Duchêne."

The position was a critical one. The corvette, during the panic caused by the carronade breaking from its lashings, had deviated from its course, and was making more for Saint Malo than for Granville. Even had she been in a condition to be handled properly, and to make sail, the Minquières barred her return to Jersey, and the cruisers prevented her making for the French coast.

There was no storm, as the pilot had said, but there was a heavy sea on, and the waves, rolling under the influence of a rough wind over a series of rocks, were highly dangerous.

The ocean never says what it wants at first. There is everything to be found in the fathomless abyss, even chicanery. One may even say that the sea has a regular method of its own in doing things; it advances, it recoils, it proposes, and refuses. It makes a start with a squall, and then withdraws it; it makes promises to the abyss, and does not fulfil them. It menaces the north, and strikes a blow at the south. All night the *Claymore* had been enveloped in fog, and feared the tempest, and now the sea had given itself the lie, but in a hideous manner; it had shadowed the storm, but materialised the reef. It never deviated from its promise of wreck, but now threatened it in another form. And now death amongst the breakers was added to extermination by battle. One enemy allied to another.

La Vieuville cried out with his jovial laugh, "Wreck here, battle there! on both sides we have thrown fives."

CHAPTER VIII.

9 AGAINST 380.

THE corvette was now little more than a mere wreck. In the faint patches of livid white spread over the inky blackness of the clouds, in the quivering transformation of the horizon, in the mysterious dull anger of the waves, there was a species of sepulchral solemnity. Except for the sibilant breath of the hostile wind, all was still. The catastrophe was rising from the abyss

in majestic silence. It resembled more a spectral manifestation than a planned attack. There was no movement amongst the rocks, no stir amongst the ships. There was an indescribable colossal silence. Had they to do with something real? It seemed like an ugly dream passing over the sea. Old legends tell of such strange visions. The corvette was, in a certain manner, between a demon reef and a phantom fleet.

The Count de Boisberthelot gave some orders in a whisper to La Vieuville, who descended to the gun deck; then the captain, seizing his telescope, placed himself aft, by the side of the pilot Gacquoil, whose efforts had been confined to keeping the vessel's head to the sea, for if she came broadside on she would inevitably be capsized.

"Pilot," asked the captain, "where are we?"

"Off the Minquières."

"On which side?"

"On the worst side."

"What sort of a bottom?"

"Friable rocks."

"Can we go about?"

"We can always die," answered the pilot.

The captain directed his telescope on the Minquières, then he turned it to the east, and looked at the vessels.

The pilot continued, as though he were talking to himself, "Yes, those are the Minquières, where the seamew and the black-headed gull take rest when they are on their way to Holland."

Meanwhile the captain had counted the sails. There were eight vessels correctly drawn up in order of battle. In the centre the towering hull of a three-decker could be distinguished.

The captain questioned the pilot.

"Do you know those vessels?"

"Certainly I do," replied Gacquoil.

"What are they?"

"The squadron."

"Of France?"

"Of the devil!"

After a short silence the captain continued, "Are all the cruisers there?"

"Not all of them."

This was true, for on the 2nd of April Valazé had announced to the Convention that ten frigates and six ships of the line were coming in the Channel. The recollection of this flashed across the captain's mind.

"Of course" said he, "the squadron consists of sixteen vessels, and here are only eight!"

"The rest," answered Gacquoil, "are hanging about the coast, and keeping an eye on us."

The captain, still looking through his glass, murmured, "A three-decker, two frigates of the first class, and five of the second."

"I, too, have had a good look at them," growled the pilot.

"They are fine ships," said the captain. "I have had something to do with commanding most of them."

"And I," answered Gacquoil, "have had a pretty close look at them; I have their full description in my head."

The captain passed his glass to the pilot, "Pilot, can you tell me what the three-decker is?" asked he.

"Yes, captain, she is the *Côte-d'Or*."

"They have altered her name," said the captain; "she used to be called *États de Bourgogne*, quite a new ship, one hundred and twenty-eight guns."

He took out of his pocket a little book and a pencil, and wrote down the figures 128. "Pilot, what is the first sail to port?"

"It is the *Expérimentée*."

"Frigate of the first class, fifty-two guns; she was refitted at Brest some two months ago," and the captain put down the figures 52.

"Pilot," continued he, "what is the next ship?"

"The *Dryad*."

"Frigate of the first class, forty guns, eighteen pounders. She has been in the Indies, and has a grand name in the navy," and he wrote under the figures 52 the number 40. Now let us go to starboard."

"Captain, they are all frigates of the second class; there are five of them."

"What is the one nearest to the three-decker?"

"The *Resolute*."

"Thirty-two guns, eighteen pounders, —now the next?"

"The *Richemont*."

"The same number? Now for the others."

"The *Atheist*." *

"A strange name to go to sea in,—the next?"

"The *Calypso*."

"And the next?"

"The *Preneuse*."

"Five frigates, then, of thirty-two guns each," and under the figures already inscribed the captain wrote down 160.

"Pilot," said he, "you have picked them out well."

"And you, captain," answered the pilot, "appear to know all about them, and that is better than only knowing their names."

The captain had his eyes fixed on his pocket-book, and was adding up the numbers in a monotone.

At this moment La Vieuville came on deck again.

"Chevalier," said the captain, "we are facing a squadron mounting three hundred and eighty guns."

"All right," answered La Vieuville.

"You have come from your inspection, La Vieuville,—how many serviceable pieces have we?"

"Nine."

"All right," returned Boisberthelot in his turn. He took back the glass from the pilot, and swept the horizon with it.

The eight ships, all black and silent, seemed motionless, but yet appeared to grow larger.

They were insensibly drawing nearer.

La Vieuville made a military salute, and addressed the captain.

"Captain," said he, "here is my report,—I distrust this corvette *Claymore*. It is always a risk to embark hastily on a vessel which you do not know, and which has no liking for you; an English ship is a traitor to the French; that dog of a carronade has proved this. I have made a regular round—the anchors are good, they are not cast iron, but metal well hammered out under the sledge hammer. Excellent cables, easy to pay out, regulation length, one hundred and seventy fathoms,—plenty of everything. Six gunners dead. One hundred and seventy rounds of ammunition for each gun."

"That is because we have only nine," mused the captain.

Boisberthelot again swept the horizon with his telescope. The slow approach of the squadron continued.

Carronades possess one advantage, they only take three men to work them; but they have this drawback, they carry a shorter distance, and are less accurate than guns. It was therefore necessary to permit the squadron to approach within range of the carronade. The captain gave his orders in a low voice, and silence was kept throughout the vessel. There was no beating to quarters, but the movement was executed without noise. The corvette was as unfit to contend with men as with the waves. Everything was done that could be done with this ruin of a ship of war; by the gangway and near the helm was collected all the canvas and spare cable to strengthen the masts with if required. The cock-pit was arranged for the wounded. According to the custom in ships of war at that period, they triced up the boarding nettings, the ball gauges were brought on deck, though it was rather late to verify the calibres, but so many unfortunate incidents had not been foreseen. To each sailor was served out an ammunition pouch, and a dirk and pair of pistols to be carried in his belt. The hammocks were stowed away, the guns pointed, the small arms were looked to, boarding axes and grappling irons placed in handy positions. The cartridge tubs were made ready and the magazine opened. Each man was at his allotted post, and all this was done without a word being spoken, as if the operation was being carried on in the chamber of a dying man. All was rapidity and melancholy. Then they brought the corvette's broadside to bear. She had six anchors like a frigate, and they let go all of them.

The cock bill anchor forward, the kedge aft, the flood anchor towards the open, the ebb anchor in the side next to the reef the lower anchor to starboard, and the sheet anchor to port.

The nine serviceable carronades were put in position, all on the side facing the enemy.

* Archives of the Navy: State of the Fleet in 1793.

The squadron, on its part, had completed its manœuvres with the same degree of silence.

The eight vessels now formed a half circle, of which the Minquières formed the chord.

The *Claymore*, enclosed by this, and held in position by her anchors, had the reef at her back, which meant wreck.

It was like a pack of hounds round a wild boar at bay, not uttering a sound, but showing their teeth.

It appeared as if one side was waiting for the other to commence.

The gunners of the *Claymore* were at their posts. Boisberthelot said to La Vieuville, "I should like to open fire first."

"Quite the whim of a flirt," answered La Vieuville.

CHAPTER IX.

SOME ONE ESCAPES.

THE passenger had not quitted the deck; he watched all that was going on with his customary air of stolidity. Boisberthelot approached him.

"Monsieur," said he, "our preparations are all made; we are now fastened securely to our tomb, and we shall soon let go. We are the prisoners of the squadron and of the reef. We must either yield to the enemy, or else founder on the breakers. We have no other choice left. There remains but one resource for us, and that is, to die. It is better to perish fighting than to be wrecked. I had rather be shot than drowned; in point of fact, I prefer fire to water, but to die is our business, not yours. You are the man chosen by the princes, you have undertaken a noble ask—to direct the war in La Vendée. Should you die, the hopes of the Royalists might be destroyed. For our honour's sake we must remain here; for yours, you must leave this. I will place a man and a small boat at your service. It is not impossible for you to reach the coast by taking a circuitous route. It is not yet daylight, the waves are high, and the sea is dark—it is a case where to fly, is to conquer."

The old man, without relaxing the severity of his look, nodded his head in token of acquiescence.

The Count de Boisberthelot raised his voice, "Soldiers and sailors," cried he.

All work was at once stopped, and from the different quarters of the ship every face was turned towards the captain.

He continued, "The man who is amongst us represents the King; he has been entrusted to us, and we must do our best to preserve him. He is necessary to the throne of France, and in default of a prince he will be—at least, such is our intention—the leader of La Vendée. He is a great General, and we were to have landed in France with him, now he must land there without us. To save his head is to save everything."

"Yes, yes, yes!" cried all the crew.

The captain continued, "He, too, is about to incur a serious danger,—to reach the coast is no easy task. The boat should be a large one to brave the turbulent sea, but it must be small to escape the watchfulness of the cruisers. It will be necessary for him to land where he will be safe, in the neighbourhood of Fougères, more than in the neighbourhood of Coutances. I want a steady sailor, a good oarsman, and a stout swimmer, who must be a countryman of these parts, and know the passes. It is yet sufficiently dark for a boat to slip away from the side of the corvette without being perceived, and soon there will be smoke enough which will assist to conceal it more than ever. The boat will draw so little water that it will pass in safety over the reefs. Where the panther is trapped the weasel escapes. The little boat will get away as fast as a pair of well-plied sculls will permit, the enemy's ships will not perceive it, and besides, during the time that it is making off, we shall be here to amuse them. Have I spoken well?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" cried the crew.

"There is not a moment to lose," continued the captain; "who will volunteer for the service?"

A sailor stepped out from a group that was gathered together in the darkness, and answered, "I will!"

CHAPTER X.

DOES HE ESCAPE?

In a few moments one of those small boats called gigs, and especially devoted to the use of the captain of a man-of-war, slipped away from the side of the vessel. In it were two men—the passenger who was seated in the stern, and the volunteer who had taken his place forward. The night was still very dark. The sailor, in obedience to the orders of the captain, pulled vigorously in the direction of the Minquières. No other route of escape was possible. A bag of biscuits, a smoked tongue, and a small keg of water had been thrown into the bottom of the boat. At the moment when the gig was pushing off from the ship, La Vieuville said in his sarcastic voice, "She is a good one to escape in, and a better one to drown in."

"Sir," said the pilot, "do not jest like that."

The little boat put off so quickly that there was soon a good distance between the ship and the gig. The wind and the sea were in the rower's favour, and the boat glided over the waves, undulating through the gloom, and hidden by the foaming tops of the billows. There was a strange, dark look of expectation on the sea. All at once, in the vast tumultuous silence of the ocean arose a human voice, the volume of which, increased by a speaking trumpet, as the mask of brass swelled the tones of the tragic actors of old, seemed almost superhuman. It was Captain Boisberthelot addressing his men. "Loyal mariners," cried he, "nail the white flag to the mainmast; we are going to see the rising of our last sun." And as he spoke the first gun was discharged from the corvette.

"Long live the King!" cried the crew.

And then from the horizon came the answering shout, loud, far away, confused, and yet distinct, "Long live the Republic!" and then there was a crash like three hundred thunderbolts bursting over the ocean.

The action had begun. The ocean was covered with smoke and fire. On all sides the sea sent up jets of foam as the cannon balls fell into it.

The *Claymore* set to work spitting fire on the eight vessels, and at the same moment the eight ships, formed in the shape of a crescent round the corvette, opened fire on her from all their guns. It seemed as if a volcano in the centre of ocean had burst into eruption. The wind occasionally lifted the huge purple cloud that hung over the battle, and the ships appeared and disappeared as it did so. At the first time this occurred the black outline of the corvette showed against a crimson background. The white flag, with the Fleur-de-Lys embroidered on it, could be seen floating from the mainmast.

The two men in the boat listened in silence.

The triangular shallow of the Minquières—a sort of submarine trinacrium—is of greater extent than the whole island of Jersey; the sea flows over it, and it has for its central point a platform which even the highest tides do not reach, from whence spring six lofty rocks, ranged in a straight line, and running towards the north-east, giving the appearance of a great wall with breaches in it at certain intervals. The channel between the platform and the six reefs is only available for boats that draw very little water. Beyond this channel is the open sea. The sailor who had volunteered to take charge of the boat steered for this channel, and so put the Minquières between the boat and the action. He managed with great skill to avoid the reefs both to port and starboard, and the tall rocks now cut off all view of the battle. The red light on the horizon and the thundering crash of the cannonade now began to grow less as the distance from it increased, and the listeners could easily imagine that the corvette was still making a fight of it, and wished to expend the last of the hundred and seventy rounds of ammunition that she possessed. Soon the boat was in open water, away from the battle, and beyond the reach of all projectiles. Little by little the aspect of the sea became less dark, the rays against which the darkness had been fighting increased in size, the foam on the waves seemed like jets of light, and the sum-

mits of the surges gave back glistening reflections.

The day had broken.

The boat was now out of range, but the most difficult part of the task remained to be done. It was certainly saved from the danger of the battle, but the risk of wreck still remained. She was in a rough sea, with low gunwale, no deck, no sail, no mast, without a compass, with no resource but her oars, in the presence of the storm and the wave,—an atom at the mercy of two giants.

Then in the midst of that wide expanse, in the centre of that vast solitude, lifting up his face upon which the morning sun gleamed, the man who was sitting in the fore part of the boat looked fixedly at his fellow-passenger and said,

"*I am brother of the man you had shot.*"

BOOK III.

HALMALO.

CHAPTER I.

SPEECH—IS THE WORD.

THE old man raised his head slowly.

The sailor who had spoken to him was about thirty years of age; his face was sunburnt. There was a strange expression of his eyes, the cultivated sagacity of the sailor being mingled in them with the simple candour of the peasant.

He grasped the oars powerfully in his hands, and had an air of gentleness about him.

In his belt could be seen two pistols, a dagger, and a rosary.

"Who are you?" asked the old man.

"I have just told you."

"What do you want with me?"

The man let go the oars, crossed his arms on his chest, and replied, "I want to kill you."

"As you like," answered the old man.

The man raised his voice. "Prepare yourself," cried he.

"What for?"

"To die."

"Wherefore?" asked the old man.

There was a short silence. The question seemed to puzzle the man, but at last he said, "I told you that I was going to kill you."

"And I asked you why."

A gleam of ferocity blazed in the sailor's eyes.

"Because you have killed my brother," said he.

The old man replied with perfect calmness, "I began by saving his life."

"That is true, you saved his life first, and ordered him to be killed afterwards."

"It was not I who killed him."

"Who then?"

"His fault!"

The sailor, with open mouth, looked at the old man; then his brows knitted in a savage frown.

"What is your name?" asked the old man.

"I am called Halmalo, but there is no need for you to know the name of the man who is going to kill you."

At that instant the sun rose completely, a ray glanced directly upon the sailor's face, and lighted up the fierce expression of his countenance.

The old man looked at him attentively.

The firing, though it still continued, was now broken and irregular. A vast cloud of smoke hung over the horizon.

The boat, which was no longer directed by the sailor, had drifted to leeward.

The mariner with his right hand drew a pistol from his belt, and with his left seized his rosary.

The old man sprang to his feet. "You believe in God?" said he.

"Our Father, which art in heaven," replied the sailor, and he made a sign of the cross.

"Have you a mother?"

"Yes."

He crossed himself a second time; and

then added, "I have said all I intend to; I give you a minute more, my lord," and he cocked his pistol.

"Why do you call me my lord?"

"Because you are a great nobleman, that is easy to be seen."

"Have you a lord?"

"Yes, and a powerful one, too; how can one live without a lord?"

"Where is he?"

"I do not know, he has left the country; he is called the Marquis of Lantenac, Viscount Fontenay, a prince of Brittany; he is the lord of the Seven Forests. I have never seen him, but that does not prevent his being my master."

"And if you saw him, would you obey him?"

"Certainly, I should be worse than a heathen if I did not do so. I owe obedience first to God, then to the king, who is God's Viceregent upon earth, and then to my lord, who stands to me in the place of a king. But this has nothing to do with the matter; you have killed my brother, and I am going to kill you."

The old man answered, "In the first place, in killing your brother I did well."

The sailor clenched his fists. "Come, enough of this," cried he.

"Be it so," said the old man; then he calmly added, "Where is the priest?"

The sailor stared at him, "The priest!" repeated he.

"Yes, the priest; I gave your brother a priest, and in return you owe me one."

"But I have not got one," answered the sailor; then he added, "How can I find a priest for you in the middle of the sea?"

All this time the scattered sounds of firing grew more and more distant.

"Those who are dying yonder have theirs with them," said the old man.

"That is true," muttered the sailor; "they have the chaplain."

The old man continued, "You will make me lose my soul, which is a serious matter."

The sailor bent his head, and seemed to debate within himself.

"And in losing my soul, you will lose your own. I pity you. Do as you like. I did my duty on board, first in saving your brother's life, and then in taking it, and I am doing my duty now, in endeavouring to save your soul. Reflect,—it is a matter that concerns yourself alone. Listen to the cannon. There are men dying there, desperate men dying in agony. There are husbands there who will never see their wives again, fathers who will never gaze upon their children's faces, brothers who, like you, will never meet their brothers again, and who is the author of all this misery? Your brother, your own brother. You believe in God, do you not? Well, at this moment God is suffering because His son, the most Christian King of France, is in prison in the Tower of the Temple. God is suffering in His persecuted Church in Brittany. God suffers in His insulted cathedrals, in His desecrated Gospels, and in His violated houses of prayer. God suffers in His murdered priests. What were we coming to do in that poor ship that is now sinking? We came to help God with all our strength. Had your brother been a good servant of the Almighty he would have done his duty faithfully, and no misfortune would have happened to the gun; the corvette would not have been disabled, she would not have been driven from her course, she would not have fallen in with that accursed fleet; and by this time we should have landed in France, all valiant men, both soldiers and sailors, who, with the sabre in hand and the white flag unfurled, happy and joyous, had come to aid the poor peasants of La Vendée, to save France, to save the King, to save God.

"That was what we had come to do, that is what we shall do, that is what I, the only one left, am going to do. But you prevent me. In this struggle of atheists against religion, in this struggle of regicides against the king, in this struggle of Satan against God, you fight under the banner of Satan. Your brother was the first ally of the demon, and you are the second. He began and you finish. You are for the regicides against the throne, for the atheists against the Church. You take away from God His last chance. Because I shall not be there,—I, who represent the King,—the villages will continue to be burnt, families to weep, priests to bleed, and all Brittany to suffer, the King to remain in prison, and Jesus Christ to be in anguish. And who, I ask

you, will have done all this? *You!* Well, go on, it is your own affair. I had other thoughts concerning you, but I have been deceived. Yes, it is true you are right—I killed your brother. Your brother was a man of courage, and I rewarded him; he was guilty, and I punished him. He neglected his duty, but I did not neglect mine; what I did then I would do again; and I swear to you by the great Saint Anne of Auray, who is now looking down upon us, that in a similar case I would have shot my own brother—I would have had my own son shot. But now you are the master to do as you like. Yes, I pity you, for you have lied to your captain. You, a Christian without faith! you, a Breton without honour! I was entrusted to your loyalty, and accepted by your treachery. You offer my death to those to whom you had promised my life. Do you know who will be the loser in all this? It is you, and you only. You take my life from the King, and you give your soul for all eternity to the fiend. It is well,—come, commit your crime. You have sold your inheritance in Paradise. Thanks to you, Satan will win the victory; thanks to you, the churches will fall in ruins; thanks to you, the unbelievers will continue to melt down the bells to cast into guns, and will destroy the bodies of men with what used to summon them to save their souls. At this very moment that I am addressing you, the very bell which pealed so joyously at your baptism may be murdering your mother; go, hasten to the aid of the demon. Do not hesitate for a moment. Yes, true that I condemned your brother, but learn that I am an instrument in the hands of God. Ah! you dare to criticise the methods by which God acts; you will sit in judgment on the thunderbolt that falls in the heavens. Take care what you are about. Unhappy man, you shall be judged by heaven itself. Do you even know if I am in a state of peace? No, you do not, yet go on all the same. Do as you wish. You are free to drag me down to hell with yourself. Our two eternal damnations are in your hands, but God will hold *you, and you only*, responsible. We are alone face to face on the open sea. Commence, terminate, complete your work. I am old, you are young; I am defenceless, you are armed. *Kill me!*"

Whilst the old man, standing erect, uttered these words in a clear, calm voice that drowned the roar of the sea, the rapid movements of the waves showing him sometimes in the light and sometimes in the shade, the sailor's face had turned a livid white; great beads of sweat bedewed his forehead, he trembled like an aspen leaf, he kissed his beads convulsively, and when the old man was silent, he hurled his pistol from him, and sank humbly on his knees.

"Pardon! my lord, pardon!" cried he, "you speak like the Almighty Himself. I was wrong; my brother was guilty; I will do all that I can to expiate his crime. Dispose of me as seemeth good to you. Order, and I will obey you."

"I pardon you," answered the old man.

CHAPTER II.

THE MEMORY OF A PEASANT IS WORTH THE KNOWLEDGE OF A CAPTAIN.

THE provisions which had been thrown into the boat were by no means useless, for the fugitives, being obliged to make wide *détours*, were thirty-six hours in reaching the coast. They passed a night on the sea, but the night was fine, though with too much moon for those who were seeking to hide themselves.

They had first to turn away from France, and steer towards Jersey. They could hear the final broadside of the sinking corvette, like the last roaring of a lion dying in a wood under the wounds of the hunters. Then a melancholy silence spread over the sea.

The corvette *Claymore* sank like the *Avenger*, but her name has not been inscribed in the annals of glory. No one is a hero who fights against his country.

Halmalo was a practised mariner; he performed miracles of dexterity and intelligence, his improvisation of a way through the reefs and the waves, the way in which he baffled the look-out of the enemy, was the work of a master hand. The wind had by this time fallen, and the sea had become more placid.

Halmalo evaded the Caux des Minquières, and coasted along the Chaunéaux-Bœufs; then, so that they might have a short time for rest, he pulled into a little cove on the north side, into which a boat could enter at low water, and then, taking to the oars, pulled southward, and managed to pass between Granville and the Island of Chausey without being seen by the sentries on Chausey or at Granville. He then made for the Bay of Saint Michael, which was a bold stroke, because it was near Cancale, which was the anchoring ground of the cruisers.

On the evening of the second day, about an hour before sunset, he left Saint Michael's Mount behind him, and landed on a beach which is but little frequented, owing to the number of quicksands in the vicinity.

Fortunately it was high water.

Halmalo beached his boat as far as he was able, tried the sands, found them firm, and then sprang on shore. The old man clambered over the side, and then examined the horizon.

"My lord," said Halmalo, "we are at the mouth of the Couesnon. There is Beauvoir to starboard, and Huisnes to port. The belfry in front of us is Ardevon."

The old man bent down into the boat, and, taking a biscuit, put it into his pocket, crying to Halmalo,

"Take what remains."

Halmalo packed away the remainder of the biscuit and meat in a bag, which he hoisted up on his shoulders.

"My lord," said he, "am I to guide you, or shall I follow you?"

"Neither one nor the other."

Halmalo looked at the old man with a puzzled air. The old man continued, "Halmalo, we are going to separate. Two together are worth nothing; we should be a thousand or only one."

He interrupted himself by taking from one of his pockets a knot of green silk, something in shape of a cockade, in the centre of which was embroidered a fleur-de-lys in gold, and continued, "Do you know how to read?"

"No."

"That is well; a man who can read is sometimes a nuisance. Have you a good memory?"

"Yes."

"That is well. Listen to me, Halmalo. You must go to the right, I to the left. I shall go towards Fougères, you towards Bazouges. Keep that bag, which gives you the appearance of a peasant. Hide your weapons, cut yourself a cudgel from the hedge, creep through the crops of rye which are tall just now, hide behind the houses, climb the fences so as to cut across the fields. Give a wide berth to all passers-by. Avoid roads and bridges. Do not go through Pontorson. Ah! you will have to cross the Couesnon,—how will you manage that?"

"I will swim it."

"Good, but there is a ford. Do you know where it is?"

"Between Ancey, and Vieux-Viel."

"Good again; there is no doubt that you belong to this part of the country."

"But the night is coming on; where will my lord sleep?"

"I will take care of myself; and where will you find you a lodging?"

"There are plenty of hollow trees; before being a sailor I was a peasant."

"Throw away your sailor's hat, it will betray you at once. You will easily find another headdress."

"Oh, a peasant's cap is not hard to procure. The first fisherman that I meet will sell me one."

"That is well. Now listen, you know the woods?"

"All of them."

"All over the country?"

"From Noirmoutier to Laval."

"Do you also know their names?"

"I know the woods, I know the names, I know all about them."

"You will forget nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Good again; and now pay attention. How many leagues can you walk in a day?"

"Ten, fifteen, eighteen,—twenty if necessary."

"You will have to do so. Now do not miss a single word of what I say. You will go first to the Forest of Saint Aubin."

"Near Lamballe?"

"Yes. On the borders of the ravine between Saint Rieul and Plédeléac you will find a large chestnut tree. You will halt there. You will see no one."

"That will not prevent some one being there, I know."

"You will give the signal; do you know how to do it?"

Halmalo inflated his cheeks, turned his face to the sea, and immediately the hooting of an owl was heard.

Coming from the depths of the darkness three was something sinister in the sound.

"Right," said the old man, "that is it."

He handed the knot of green silk to Halmalo.

"This is my badge of authority; there is no necessity that any one should know my name. This knot will be sufficient; take it. The lily on it was embroidered by Madame Royal in the prison of the Temple."

Halmalo bent one knee to the ground, and pressed his lips to it, and then checked himself, as though terrified at his audacity in kissing it.

"May I?" asked he.

"Yes, as you kiss the blessed crucifix."

Halmalo kissed the lily.

"Rise," said the old man.

Halmalo got up, and placed the silken knot carefully in his bosom.

"This is the order that I give you—'*Revolt, and mercy to none.*' On the edge of the forest of Saint Aubin you will give the signal three times. At the third you will see a man rise from the earth."

"From some hole under a tree,—I know all about that."

"That man is Planchenault, called also Cœur-de-roi. Show him the knot, he will understand you. Then, by paths which you must make for yourself, you must go to the Forest of Astillé; there you will find a cripple named Mousqueton, who has never shown mercy to a single soul; you will tell him that I love him, and order him to pass the word for a rising through all the neighbourhood. You will then proceed to the wood of Couesbon, which is a league from Ploërmel. You will give the owl's hoot, and a man will emerge from a hole; that will be Monsieur Thualt, the seneschal of Ploërmel, who has been a member of what they call the Assembly, but on the right side. You will tell him to fortify the Castle of Couesbon, which belongs to the Marquis de Guer, who has left the country. There are ravines, small woods, and uneven ground all around it, and it can be made a strong place. Monsieur Thualt is a clever and an upright man. You will then go to Saint-Guen-les-Toits, and you will speak with Jean Chouan, who, according to my idea, is the real leader. Then you must make for the Forest of Ville-Anglose, and there you will see Guilter, called Saint Martin. You will tell him to keep an eye on a certain Courmesnil, who is a son-in-law of old Gaupil de Préfeln, who is at the head of the revolutionary crew of Argentan; can you remember all this? I do not write anything, because nothing must ever be written. La Rouarie once made out a list, and that lost everything. You will then proceed to the woods of Rougefeu, where you will find Méelette, who leaps over the ditches with a long pole."

"I know; a leaping pole."

"Can you use one?"

"I should not be a Breton peasant if I could not do so. The leaping pole is our very good friend. It increases our arms and lengthens our legs."

"That is to say, it makes your enemy small, and shortens the road,—a useful weapon."

"Once, with a leaping pole, I stood my ground against three custom-house officers who were armed with sabres."

"When was that?"

"Ten years ago."

"When the King was on the throne?"

"Yes."

"You have fought under the King then?"

"Certainly."

"Against whom?"

"By my faith, I don't know; I was a smuggler of salt."

"It is well."

"They called it fighting against the taxes. The taxes are not the same as the King, are they?"

"Yes—no; but it is not necessary for you to understand."

"I beg your lordship's pardon, for having put a question to your lordship."

"Let us go on; do you know La Tourge?"

"Know La Tourge? Why, I come from that part!"

"How do you mean?"

"I come from Parigné."

"You are right, La Tourge is close to Parigné."

"Do I know La Tourge, indeed! the old round tower which is the ancestral home of my lord! There is a great iron door there that separates the old from the new building, which you could not blow down with a cannon. In the new part of the building is the famous book of Saint Bartholomew, which people come from miles away to see. There are lots of frogs in the grass about the place. When I was quite a little boy I played with those frogs; and then there is the subterranean passage,—I know it well. There is no one that knows it better than I do."

"What subterranean passage? I do not know what you mean."

"It was used in former times when La Tourge was besieged; then the people that were shut up inside could save themselves by passing through it and getting into the wood."

"Yes, there is a passage like that at the castles of Jupellière, and La Hunaudage, also in the Tower of Champéon; but there is nothing like it at La Tourge."

"Well, my lord, I know nothing of those other places of which your lordship talks, but that of La Tourge I do know, because I come from that part of the country; and in addition to that, it is only I that know anything about it. People don't talk about it. It was forbidden because it had been used in the wars of Monsieur de Rohan. My father knew the secret, and he showed it to me. I know the way to get in and to get out. If I am in the wood I can get into the tower, and if I am in the tower I can go into the forest without any one seeing me, and when the enemy make their way in they will see nobody. Yes, that is what there is at La Tourge, I know it well."

The old man remained silent for a short time.

"You are in error," said he at length; "if there was a secret passage I should know of its existence."

"My lord, I am certain of it; there is a stone that turns."

"Ah, that is good; you peasants always believe in stones that turn, stones that sing, stones that go down to the brook to drink. A lot of tales!"

"But since I have myself made the stone turn——"

"Like others who have heard stones sing, comrade. La Tourge is a fortalice, safe, strong, and easy to be defended; but he who counts on finding a subterranean passage by which to escape from it is a simpleton."

"But, my lord——"

The old man shrugged his shoulders. "Do not let us lose any more time," said he; "let us speak of affairs of some importance."

The peremptory tone in which he spoke cut short Halmalo's persistence. "Let us get on," continued the old man. "Listen, from de Rougefeu you will go to the Forest of Montchevrier, where you will find Benedicité, who is the Chief of the Twelve,—he is another of the staunch ones. He says his *Benedicité* whilst he is having his prisoners shot. There must be no half measures in warfare. From Montchevrier you will go to——" He suddenly interrupted himself, "I forgot the money," said he. He felt in all his pockets, and placed in the hands of Halmalo a purse and a pocket-book. "In this book are thirty thousand francs in assignats, amounting to about three livres and ten sous; I confess that the assignats are false, but they have nearly as much value as the real ones; now, pay attention,—here are a hundred louis in gold. I have given you all that I possess. Here, I have need of nothing; besides it is better that they should find no money on me. And now let me continue my instructions. From Montchevrier you will go to Antrain, where you will see Monsieur de Trotté; from Antrain to Jupellière, where you must speak to Monsieur de Rochecotte; from Jupellière to Novreins, then you will seek out the Abbé Bandoeis. Can you remember all this?"

"As well as my *Paternoster*."

"You will see Monsieur Dubois Guy at Saint Brice-en-logle, Monseiur de Turpin at Morannes, which is a fortified town, and the Prince of Talmont at Château Gonthier."

"Will a prince condescend to speak to me?" asked Halmalo.

"Why not, since I speak to you?"

Halmalo took off his hat.

"Every one when they see the lily that Madame embroidered will receive you well. Do not forget that you are going into a country of clowns, and peasants. You will have to disguise yourself. That is an easy task. The Republicans are such fools, that with a blue coat, a three-cornered hat, and a tricoloured cockade, you can pass anywhere. There are no more regiments, no more uniforms, no more numbers on the buttons,—each clothes himself in the rags that he thinks fit. Afterwards you will push on to Saint Mhervé. There you will see Gaulier, known as grand Pierre. From thence to the cantonment of Parné, where are men with black faces. They load their guns with pebbles and put in a double charge of powder, so that the discharge may sound louder. This is well, but above all urge on them to kill, and kill, and kill. You must find your way to the camp of Vache Noir, which is on a hill in the midst of the woods of La Charnie, then to camp Avoine, thence to camp Vert, and to the camp Fourmis. You must also go to Grand Bordage, called also Haut de Pré, where a widow lives, whose daughter has been married to Treton, nicknamed the Englishman. Grand Bordage is in the parish of Quelaines. You will next visit Epineux le Chevreuil, Sillé le Guillaum, Parannes, and all the men who are lurking in the forests. You have, I suppose, friends, and you must send them to the borders of High and Low Maine. You must see Jean Treton in the parish of Vaisges, Sans Regret at Bejnon, Chambord at Bonchamps, the brothers Corbin at Maisoncelles, and Petit Sans Peur at Saint Jean-sur-Erve, the same man that is sometimes called Bourdoiseau. When you have accomplished all this, and the words '*Revolt, no quarter,*' given every where, you can join headquarters, the Catholic and Royal Army, wherever it may be. You must see Messieurs Elbée, Lescure, and Larochjacquelin, and all the leaders that may still be alive. You will exhibit to them the knot as a sign of my authority. They will understand its meaning. You are but a common sailor, but Cathelineau is only a carter. You will tell him from me, this: The time has come to unite the two wars, the little and the great one. The great makes the most noise, the little does the most execution. La Vendée is good, *Chouannerie* is bad, and in civil war it is the bad that is the best. The success of a war must be judged by the amount of harm that it does."

He interrupted himself again. "Halmalo, I tell you all this. You do not understand the reasons, but you comprehend the things themselves. I have confidence in you, since I have seen the way in which you managed the boat. You do not understand navigation, and yet you performed extraordinary manœuvres: he who can steer a boat can act as pilot to an insurrection, and the manner in which you defeated the efforts of the sea showed me that you will fulfil my orders well. But to go on. You will repeat to the chiefs all that I have told you in your own words, but I am sure that it will be well told. I prefer war in the woods to war in the open country. I have no desire to draw up a hundred thousand peasants to be mowed down by the volleys of the *Blues*, or the artillery of Monsieur Carnot. Before a month has passed, I desire to have five hundred thousand killers hidden in the thickets. My game is the army of the Republic. Poaching is my way of conducting a campaign; I am the strategist of the brushwood. Ah! there is another word that you do not comprehend. No matter; this you *will* understand, and that is, '*No quarter, and ambuscades in every part.*'

"I depend more on irregular fighting than on open battle. You may add that the English will join us. Let us get the Republic between two fires. Europe will assist us. Let us make an end of the revolution. Kings will lead their kingdoms against it—let us lead our parishes. You will say all this. Do you understand me?"

"Yes; all must be put to fire and sword."

"That is it."

"No quarter."

"Not to a soul."

"I will go everywhere that you have told me."

"And take care of yourself, for in this country it is easy to become a dead man."

"Death is not what I think of. He who takes the first step often has on the last shoes that he will wear in life."

"You are a brave man."

"And suppose they ask me my lord's name?"

"It must not be made public yet; you will say that you do not know it, and that will be the truth."

"Where shall I see you again, my lord?"

"In the place where I shall be."

"And how shall I know it?"

"Because all the world will know it. Before eight days have passed every one will be talking of me; I will make terrible examples. I will avenge our king and our religion, and you will soon know that it is I of whom they are talking."

"I comprehend."

"Do not forget a single order."

"You may be quite easy."

"Go now; may God protect you."

"I will do all that you have told me,—I will go, I will speak, I will obey, I will command."

"Good."

"And if I succeed——?"

"I will make you a Knight of Saint Louis."

"Like my brother: and if I fail, you will have me shot?"

"Yes, like your brother."

"That is settled then, my lord."

The old man bent down his head, and seemed to fall into a deep reverie. When he raised his eyes he was alone, and Halmalo was a dark spot disappearing on the horizon.

The sun was just setting.

The seamews and the hooded gulls were returning home from their haunts at sea.

All over the land was that vague restlessness which betokens the fall of night; the frogs croaked, the kingfishers whistled as they rose from the pools of water, the gulls, the rooks, and the crows had begun their usual nightly chorus; the cry of the landbirds could be heard, but no sound of a human voice. Not a sail in the bay, not a labourer in the fields. As far as the eye could reach stretched a wide and solitary plain. The great thistles that grew in the sand quivered. The pallid sky of evening cast a livid hue over the shore. Far away in the distance the pools of water looked like sheets of tin spread flatly on the ground. The wind was moaning out at sea.

BOOK IV.

TELLMARCH.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE TOP OF THE SANDHILL.

THE old man permitted Halmalo to get out of sight, then, wrapping his mantle closely round him, he directed his steps towards Huisnes, whilst Halmalo was going in the direction of Beauvoir. Behind him was an enormous black triangle, with a cathedral forming a tiara, and its fortifications a cuirass; whilst the massive towers, one round and the other square, assisted the mountains to bear the weight of the church and village. This was Mount Saint Michael, which is to the ocean what the mighty structure of Cheops is to the desert. The shifting sands of the bay of Mount Saint Michael insensibly lessen these sandhills. There was at that period a very lofty one between Ardevon and Huisnes, which has now entirely disappeared.

This hill, which was dispersed by one of the storms so common at the time of the equinox, was a very ancient one, and on its summit was a column erected in the twelfth century in memory of a council held at Avranche, in which was fulminated a decree against the murderers of Saint Thomas of Canterbury. From the top of the hill the country was visible for a long

distance, and all points of the compass could be seen.

The old man advanced towards this hill, and began to ascend it. When he had reached the summit he seated himself on one of the corners of the base of the stone, and, placing his back against it, began to examine the map of the country that lay stretched at his feet. He seemed to be seeking out a path in a district with which he was well acquainted. In this vast landscape, dimmed by the twilight, there was nothing distinct except the black line of the horizon against a white sky. From where he was he could distinguish the roofs of eleven towns and villages, and at many leagues all the church towers along the coast, which are very lofty, so as to serve the mariners for landmarks. At the end of a few minutes the old man seemed to have discovered what he was searching for in clear obscure of the firmament, for his glance at last stopped on a clump of trees enclosing a mass of roofs and walls which was just visible between the plain and the woods, and which was evidently a farm. He gave a satisfied nod with the air of a man who says to himself, "That is it, it is there," and he began to trace in the air with his finger the plan of a route through the hedges and the fields. From time to time he examined a strangely-shaped object, which floated above the principal building of the farm, and seemed to ask himself what it could be. It was colourless and indistinct, because of the twilight. It could not be a weathercock because it floated, and there was no reason to suppose that it was a flag. He was much fatigued, and remained seated upon the angle of the stone and allowed himself to sink into that vague sort of forgetfulness which gives to a wearied man his first minute of repose.

If there is one hour in which peace and quiet reigns, it is that serene moment, the evening time. The influence of this hour was on him. He enjoyed it, he gazed, he listened. At what? At peace and quiet. The most savage natures have, at times, their moments of tenderness. Suddenly this tranquillity was not broken, but as it were emphasised, by the sound of voices passing below him. Women and children were talking. Such joyous chimes sometimes unexpectedly break through the shadows. The group from whence these voices issued could not be seen on account of the brushwood, but the speakers were evidently skirting the hill and moving towards the plain and the forest. Their voices rose clear and distinct, and caught the ear of the old man as he sat buried in thought. The speakers were so near that he did not miss a word of what they said.

A woman's voice said, "Let us hasten, La Flécharde; is this the way?"

"No, that is the way."

And the conversation went on between the two voices, one bold and the other timid.

"What is the name of the farm that we are living at just at present?"

"Herbe en Pail."

"Are we far from it now?"

"A good quarter of an hour's walk."

"Let us hurry in, and get our soup."

"Yes, for truly we are rather late."

"We must run, but these little ones of yours are tired. We are only two women, and cannot carry three mites. And besides, you, La Flécharde, are already carrying one, a regular lump of lead; you have weaned that little glutton, but yet you always have her in your arms. That is a bad habit to get into. Now just make her walk—oh, very well, you won't; so much the worse, the soup will be cold."

"Ah, what good shoes these are that you have given me! one would think I had been measured for them."

"That is better than going barefooted, is it not?"

"Come, make haste, René Jean."

"Yes, it is he that is keeping us back; he must needs talk to all the little peasant girls he meets on the road. He will soon be a man."

"He is five years old already."

"Tell me, René Jean, why did you speak to that little girl in the village?"

A child's voice, which was a boy's, replied, "Because I knew her."

The woman continued, "How, you know her?"

"Yes," answered the child, "this morning we had a romp together."

"There is a gay young fellow!" cried the other woman; "we have only been in this part of the world three days, he is as

big as Camfeit, and he has picked up a girl already."

The voices died away in the distance, and all was silence again.

CHAPTER II.

EARS HAVE THEY, AND DO NOT HEAR.

THE old man remained motionless, he was no longer meditating, hardly even dreaming. Around him all was peace, rest, security, and solitude. It was even yet light on the top of the hill, though wood and plain were buried in shadow. The moon was rising in the east, and a few stars studded the pale blue of the firmament. This man, plunged in violent pre-occupations, allowed himself to glide into the inexpressible peacefulness of the infinite. He felt rising within him the faint dawn of hope, if the word hope can be applied to the terrible deeds of civil war. For the moment it seemed to him that, having escaped from the ravening sea and reached the land, all danger had vanished. No one was acquainted with his name; the enemy had entirely lost sight of him; he had left no sign behind him—for the sea permits no trace to exist on its surface—hidden, ignored, not even suspected. He felt a sense of relief spreading over him which he could hardly account for. A little more, and he would have slept. That which gave the mysterious charm of this peaceful hour to the man, who, a prey to such thoughts within and to such changes without, was its perfect silence.

He could hear nothing but the wind moaning across the sea, but after a time habitude caused the wind hardly to be heard by the listener.

All at once he rose to his feet with a bound. His attention had been suddenly aroused; he gazed eagerly towards the horizon. Some particular object had attracted his gaze. That which he was looking at was the belfry of Cormeray, which stood before him in the midst of the plain. Something out of the way was going on within it.

The outline of the steeple stood out clear and distinct against the sky. The tower, surmounted by a pyramid, could easily be seen, and between the two, the belfry, perfectly square, without any protection from the wind, and open at all sides, as is the custom in Brittany. Now this belfry appeared to open and shut alternately, at regular intervals. Its lofty opening showed itself sometimes white and sometimes black, sometimes you could see the sky through it, at others you could not; first there would be a gleam of light, then all would be darkness again, and each change succeeding the other with the regularity of a hammer striking upon an anvil. The belfry of Cormeray was about two leagues in a straight line distant from the old man. He glanced to the right toward that of Baquer Picau, which also was on the horizon; it, too, was opening and closing like that of Cormeray.

He looked to the left at the belfry of Tanis,—just the same appearance. He surveyed all the belfrys on the horizon one after the other; on his left, those of Courtils, Précey, Crollon, and Croix Avranchin, and on his right, those of Raz-sur-Couernon, Mordrey, and of Pas, whilst in front of him was that of Pontorson. The same alternate changes of light and darkness were visible in each belfry.

What could this mean?

It meant that all the bells were in full swing. In order that they might appear and disappear in this manner they must be rung with great energy.

What was it then?—It was evidently the tocsin. They were ringing the tocsin, they were ringing it furiously, they were ringing it everywhere,—in all the parishes, in all the villages, in every belfry, and yet he could hear nothing.

This was caused by the distance, which prevented the sound from reaching him, and from the wind, which blew off the land and carried it far away.

All these furious bells pealing on all sides, at the same time perfect silence, had a strangely weird effect.

The old man gazed around him and listened. He could not hear the tocsin, but he could see it. To see the tocsin was a curious sensation.

Why were these bells sounding? Why was the tocsin pealing? Against whom?

CHAPTER III.

SHOWING THAT LARGE LETTERS ARE USEFUL.

CERTAINLY some one was being hunted.

Who could it be?

A shudder convulsed this iron-nerved man. It could not be he. They could not have guessed his arrival. It was impossible that the delegates on duty in these parts could have already been informed of his having just disembarked. The corvette had evidently foundered, and not a man had escaped, and in her, with the exception of Boisberthelot and La Vieuville, no one knew his name.

The belfries kept up their terrible game. Mechanically he counted and examined them, and his thoughts, wandering from one conjecture to another, had all those changes caused by a sudden fall from perfect security to consciousness of peril.

Still, however, the ringing of the tocsin might be accounted for in many ways; and in the end he consoled himself by repeating, "No one knows of my arrival, and no one knows my name."

For some time past he had heard a slight sound overhead and behind him, like the rustling of a leaf. At first he took no notice of it, then, as the sound continued, or, it may be said, persisted, he ended by turning towards it. It *was* a leaf, but it was a leaf of paper. The wind was endeavouring to tear away a large handbill placed above his head on the stone pillar. This handbill had only been recently pasted up, and the paste was still wet, so that the wind found but little opposition to its efforts to detach it.

The old man had climbed the hill on the opposite side, and had not perceived the bill on reaching the summit.

He clambered on to the angle of the stone upon which he had been sitting, and placed his hand upon the corner of the paper which the wind had lifted up. The sky was calm, and the twilight in June lasts a long time. The foot of the hill was in complete darkness, but the upper parts were still light. Part of the handbill was printed in very large letters, and there was still sufficient light to enable him to read them. What he read was this:—

"THE REPUBLIC OF FRANCE, ONE AND INDIVISIBLE.

"We, Prieur of the Marne, acting Representative of the People: posted to the army of Cherbourg and the adjacent parts, order—

"That the ex-Marquis of Lantenac, and Viscount Fontenay, calling himself a Prince of Brittany, be proclaimed an outlaw, he having clandestinely landed on the coast of Granville, and is placed beyond the pale of the law.

"A price is set upon his head, and there will be paid to any one who will deliver him up the sum of sixty thousand livres. This sum will not be paid in assignats but in gold. A battalion of the army of Cherbourg will be at once despatched to search for, and to capture, the ex-Marquis of Lantenac. All citizens of the Republic are enjoined to afford every assistance.

"Given at the Town Hall of Granville this second day of June, 1793.

"PRIEUR OF MARNE."

Beneath this signature was something in much smaller characters, which could not be read owing to the fading light. The old man pulled his hat over his eyes, then his seaman's cloak up to his chin, and descended the hill rapidly. There would have been danger in lingering on the summit whilst it was still light. Perhaps he had been there too long already, for the top of the sandhill was the only point around that was still visible. When he had reached the foot, and had plunged into the darkness, he relaxed his speed. He took the path that he had mentally mapped out before to the farm, having probably reasons for believing that he would find a place of security there. All the country was deserted, at that time there was no one abroad.

He halted behind a bush, turned his coat with the hairy side out, refastened his tattered cloak, and hurried on.

It was bright moonlight now.

He came to a spot where two roads branched off, and at the angle of which stood an old stone cross. On the shaft

of the cross he detected something white, which was apparently a handbill similar to that which he had just read; he drew near to it.

"Where are you going?" asked a voice.

He turned sharply round. A man was standing by the hedge, he was as tall as he was, his head was covered with white hair, and his clothes were even more ragged and torn than those of the old man. There was a strange similarity between them. The man leant on a long staff and repeated, "Where are you going to?"

"First tell me where I am?" answered the old man with a calm and haughty air.

"You are in the barony of Tanis; I am its beggar, and you are its lord."

"I?"

"Yes, you, Marquis of Lantenac."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEGGAR.

The Marquis of Lantenac, for so we will term him for the future, answered gravely,

"Yes, it is I; now give me up."

The man continued, "We are both at home here, you in the castle, I in the thicket."

"Make an end of this; give me up, I say," repeated the marquis.

The man went on, "You were going to the Farm of Herbe en Pail, were you not?"

"Yes."

"Do not go there, then."

"Why?"

"Because the Blues are there."

"Since when?"

"For the last three days."

"Did the tenants of the farm offer any resistance?"

"No, they threw open all their doors."

"Indeed!" remarked the marquis.

The strange man pointed with his finger to the roof of the farmhouse, which rose through the trees some distance off. "Do you see that roof, marquis?" asked he.

"Yes."

"Do you see anything above it?"

"Something floating?"

"Yes."

"It is a flag."

"A tricoloured one!" returned the beggar.

This was the object that had already excited the marquis' attention from the top of the sandhill.

"Have they not been ringing the tocsin?" asked the marquis.

"Yes."

"For what reason?"

"Because of your arrival."

"But there is no sound from the bells."

"The wind carries it away."

The beggar continued, "You have read the handbill about yourself?"

"Yes."

"They are hunting for you." Then, casting a glance at the farmhouse, he added, "There is half a regiment there."

"Of republicans?"

"Parisians."

"Well," said the marquis, "let us get on," and he took a few steps in the direction of the farm.

The beggar seized him by the arm. "Do not go there," said he.

"Where would you have me go?"

"With me."

The marquis cast a searching glance at the mendicant.

"Listen, marquis," said the latter; "it is not very grand at my place, but it is safe; a hut with a lower roof than a cave, for flooring there is plenty of seaweed, for a roof, boughs and grass. At the farmhouse you will be shot; with me you will have a night's rest. You must be tired. To-morrow the Blues will march, and you can go where you like."

The marquis looked at the beggar attentively.

"On which side are you?" asked he; "are you a royalist or a republican?"

"I am a poor man."

"Neither royalist nor republican?"

"I believe not."

"Are you for or against the King?"

"I have no time for that sort of thing."

"What do you think of passing events?"

"That I have not enough to live on!"

"And yet you came to my aid!"

"I saw that you had been proclaimed; what is the law, how can one be beyond the pale of it? I do not understand,—as for me, am I within the law, or beyond it?

I know nothing about it. Do I break the law if I die of hunger?"

"How long is it since you have been dying of hunger?"

"All my lifetime."

"And yet you came to my help?"

"Yes."

"For what reason?"

"Because I said to myself, 'Here is some one even worse off than myself; I have the right to live, and he has not.'"

"That is true, and you save me?"

"Without doubt. We are brothers, marquis. I seek for bread, you seek for life; we are both beggars."

"But do you know that there is a price on my head?"

"Yes."

"How do you know that?"

"I have read the proclamation."

"You can read then?"

"Yes, and write also; why should I be a brute?"

"Then since you know how to read, and since you have read the handbill, you know that the man that will give me up will receive sixty thousand francs?"

"I know that."

"Not in assignats."

"I know,—in gold."

"You know that sixty thousand francs is a fortune?"

"Yes."

"And that any one who gives me up will be wealthy for life?"

"Yes, and what next?"

"I am talking of your future fortune."

"And that is just what I am thinking of. On seeing you I said to myself, 'When I think that any one who gives up this man will gain sixty thousand francs, and make his fortune—I—well, come with me quickly, and let us hide ourselves.'"

The marquis followed the mendicant.

They entered into a thicket. The lurking-place of the beggar was there. It was a kind of hole under an old oak which he had taken possession of; it had been hollowed out under the roots, and thatched with branches. It was dark, low, concealed, and invisible. There was just space for two persons.

"I foresaw that I should have a guest one day!" remarked the beggar.

This kind of half-subterranean lurking-place, less rare in Brittany than may be supposed, is called in the peasant dialect a *carnichot*. This name is also given to the hiding-places made in the thickness of the walls.

The beggar's dwelling-place was furnished with a few earthen pots, a rough bed of seaweed, dried and washed, a quilt made of some coarse woollen stuff, a few tallow candles, with a flint and steel, and some charred furze twigs for tinder.

They bent down, and, crawling a little, penetrated into the subterranean chamber which the great roots of the tree divided into various strange compartments, and seated themselves on a heap of seaweed which composed the bed. The open space between the two roots by which they had entered, and which served as a door, permitted some light to enter.

In the corner there was a pitcher of water, a cake of buckwheat, and some chestnuts.

"Let us sup," said the beggar.

They shared the chestnuts, the marquis produced his piece of biscuit, they ate from the same black loaf, and drank from the same jug of water in turn.

Then they conversed.

The marquis began to question the beggar.

"Then you don't care what happens; everything to you is the same?"

"Very nearly so; you are lords and nobles, it is your affair entirely."

"But after all, every-day events——"

"Are out of my reach!" And then the beggar added, "And there are many other things that are beyond my reach,—the sun that rises, the moon that increases or diminishes, I pay more attention to such matters;" he drank a draught from the pitcher and muttered, "good cool water," adding, "How do you like the water, my lord?"

"What is your name?" asked the marquis.

"I am called Tellmarch, they also term me the *Caimand*."

"I know Caimand is a regular country word."

"Which means beggar; I have also been nicknamed the '*Old one;*' it is now nearly forty years since I have been called old man!"

"Forty years! but you are a young man still."

"*I* have never been young; *you*, marquis, on the contrary, will never be old. Your legs, when you were climbing the sandhill, seemed to be those of a man of twenty years of age. I begin to be unable to walk; after going about a league, I commence to grow weary; and yet we are both about the same age. Rich people have the pull over us, they can eat every day. To eat is to keep strong." After a short silence the beggar continued, "Poor and rich, it is a complicated affair, and produces terrible catastrophes; at least, that is my idea. The poor want to become rich, and the rich do not wish to become poor; I don't mix myself up in the matter at all, as I think that that sums up the whole matter. I was not born to be either a debtor or a creditor. I know that there is a debt, and that some one is paying it. That is all. I should have preferred them not to have killed the King, but really I do not know why. If I say this, some one will answer, 'Just recollect how they used to hang up people on the trees for a mere nothing.' Why, just for a shot fired at one of the King's roebucks, I saw a man hung up who had a wife and seven children. There is plenty to be said on both sides."

He was silent for a little time, and then said, "You must understand I don't pretend to any judgment; things come and go, but I remain in the same place—under the canopy of heaven."

Again Tellmarch subsided into thought, and then recommenced again. "Then I know a little how to set a broken limb, and am a bit of a doctor. I know the properties of herbs; the peasants, seeing that I take notice of things that they do not understand, look upon me as a sorcerer; because I pass my time in dreaming, they think that I must have a great deal of knowledge."

"You belong to this part of the country?" said the marquis.

"I have never been out of it in my life."

"You know me too?"

"Certainly, I saw you last when you were passing through here some two years ago, on your way to England. Just now I saw a man on the top of the sandhill—a tall man. Tall men are rare, for Bretons, as a rule, are short. I looked at him well; I had read the proclamation; when you came down I recognised you by the light of the moon."

"And yet I did not recognise you."

"You have seen me, but you took no notice of me," and Tellmarch the beggar added, "I saw *you*,—the beggar and the bestower do not look at each other with the same eyes."

"Then you have met me often before?"

"Often, since I am your beggar; I was the poor man that used to stand at the end of the avenue leading to your château. You have occasionally given me alms; he who gives pays no attention, it is he who receives that examines and observes. A beggar is another name for a spy. But I, though I am sad and miserable, try to do no harm by my spying. I hold out my hand, and that is all you look at; you throw me the charity that I require in the morning that I may not die by the evening. Sometimes I am twenty-four hours without food. Occasionally a copper coin is life to me. I have owed my life to you, and I give you yours."

"Then it is true you save me?"

"Yes, my lord," answered Tellmarch gravely; "upon one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you do no harm here."

"I come here to do good," answered the marquis.

"Let us sleep, then," said the beggar.

They lay down side by side on the bed of seaweed. The marquis, worn out as he was, remained for a moment in a reverie, then in the deepening darkness he glanced at the beggar and threw himself down. To lie on the low bed was to be on the ground, and he took advantage of the opportunity to place his ear against the ground; he could hear a strange humming noise which appeared to come from under the earth; sounds, it is known, reach far down into the depths of the earth—it was the peal of the tocsin.

The sound continued as the marquis turned round and slept.

CHAPTER V.

GAUVAIN'S SIGNATURE.

WHEN he awoke it was broad daylight. The beggar was standing up, not in his lurking-place, for that was not sufficiently high to enable him to do so, but outside, on the threshold. He was leaning on his long staff, and the sun shone full on his face.

"My lord," said Tellmarch, "the clock in the turret of Tanis church has just struck four; I heard it, therefore the wind has changed, and must be blowing in shore. I can hear no other sounds; the tocsin, therefore, must have ceased. All is quiet in the farm and hamlet of Herbe en Pail. The Blues are either asleep, or else have taken their departure. The worst part of the danger has therefore passed away. It will be wise for us to separate, and it is the hour for me to go my rounds," and, pointing with his finger in one direction, he added, "I am going that way, therefore you had better go the other way."

He bowed respectfully to the marquis, and, holding out the remains of their supper, said, "Take some chestnuts, you will be hungry."

A moment afterwards he had disappeared behind the trees.

The marquis rose to his feet and took the direction pointed out by Tellmarch.

It was that delicious time of day which in the Norman peasant dialect is called the "song time of the morning." The finches and the sparrows flew twittering about. The marquis took the path by which he had come the night before. He emerged from the thicket, and found himself at the cross-roads marked with the stone cross. The proclamation was still there, bright and smiling in the rising sun. He remembered that at the foot of it there had been something written that he could not read owing to the smallness of the letters and the fading light. He went straight to the pedestal of the cross. The proclamation did not terminate with the signature of PRIEUR, OF THE MARNE, but had underneath two lines in smaller characters:—

"*The identity of the ex-marquis of Lantenac having been properly established, he will be shot on the spot.*

"GAUVAIN.

"*Commanding Battalion of the Column of Search.*"

"Gauvain!" repeated the marquis.

He stopped for a moment in a melancholy reverie, his eyes fixed upon the handbill.

"Gauvain!" repeated he, then he continued his route, turned his head, looked at the cross, retraced his steps, read the proclamation again, and then with heavy steps once more resumed his journey; had any one been near him, they would have heard him repeatedly murmur half aloud the name "Gauvain!"

From the deeply-cut paths by which he was cautiously making his way, he could no longer see the roof of the farmhouse which was on his left-hand side; he was skirting a steep little hill, covered with what is termed in Brittany the "long thorn" in full bloom. This little eminence had a clear space on its summit, called by the Britons a *hure* (a head).

At its foot the eye lost itself amongst the trees, every leaf of which was bathed in sunlight. All nature was full of the joy of the morning. All of a sudden this peaceful scene changed its aspect. It was like the bursting forth of an ambush. There was a terrible sort of roar composed of savage outcries and gunshots, which resounded through the smiling fields and sunny glades, and a heavy cloud of smoke, mingled with tongues of flame, rose from the side upon which the farmhouse stood, as though the village and the buildings belonging to the farm were burning like a truss of straw.

It was a strange and terrible transition from perfect calmness to utter fury, an explosion of hell in the full brightness of day. A horror without any warning. There was evidently fighting going on at Herbe en Pail. The marquis stopped short.

There is no one who in a similar case would not have experienced that feeling of curiosity which is stronger than the sense of danger. A feeling arises that you must see all, even if you perish in so doing. The marquis ascended the eminence by

the side of which ran the hollow way. From the summit he might be seen, but he could certainly see. In a few minutes he had gained the top and looked around him.

It was a fact there was a heavy fire of musketry and a conflagration; he could hear the shouts of the combatants and see the flames. The farmhouse was the centre of some terrible incident. What could it be? The farm of Herbe en Pail had been attacked, but by whom? Was it a fight? Or was it not rather a military execution? The Blues, and they were empowered to do so by a decree of the revolutionary convention, frequently punished refractory villages by setting fire to them. For instance, every village where the *abattis* prescribed by law had not been made; or where passages had not been cut through the brushwood to enable the cavalry to act, were subject to immediate punishment. The village of Bouyon near Ernée had been recently destroyed for neglect of this kind. Was the same being done at Herbe en Pail? It was certain that none of these passages for the use of troops, which were ordered by the decree, had been cut through the coppices and enclosures. Was punishment being inflicted for this? Had an order of this kind reached the troops who had bivouaced at the farmhouse? And did not this advanced guard form a portion of those columns of exploration nicknamed, "infernal columns"?

A dense and wild thicket surrounded the little hill upon the summit of which the marquis had taken up his position. This thicket, which was called the cover of Herbe en Pail, but which was, in fact, a small wood, extended to the fields of the farm, and, like all the copses in Brittany, concealed a perfect labyrinth of those ravines, paths, and hollow ways in which the Republican armies were so often helplessly entangled.

The punishment, if a punishment it was, must have been short, sharp, and decisive. Like all acts of brutality, it was over in a very brief space. Civil war seems to be the pretext for committing unheard-of atrocities. Whilst the marquis, puzzling himself with all sorts of conjectures as to what was going on, and hesitating to leave the top of the hill, remained where he was, listening and watching, the sounds of destruction ceased, or rather, to speak more correctly, gradually died away. The marquis could distinguish something like the rushing of bodies of men through the brushwood; there was much movement under the trees. From the farm buildings a band of excited men seemed to rush into the wood. He could hear the rolling of drums as they beat the advance and the assembly; the musketry ceased. Now the sounds more resembled those of a *battue*; they seemed to be beating the woods, searching them thoroughly, pursuing some one, and tracking him out. It was evident that they were seeking some one. The sounds were scattered, and yet distinct; there was a confused noise of words of anger and triumph, a murmur in which shouts could be heard, but in which nothing definite could be distinguished, but all at once, as an outline sometimes shows itself in a cloud, something tangible at length appeared, plain and distinct in the tumult. It was a name, a name repeated by a thousand voices, and the marquis could plainly distinguish this cry,

"*Lantenac, the Marquis of Lantenac.*"

It was he whom they were seeking.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF CIVIL WAR.

All at once, around him, in front of him, behind him, the thicket seemed to bristle with guns, bayonets, and sabres, a tricoloured flag showed itself through the half light of the woodland, the cry of "*Lantenac*" burst again upon his ears, and at his feet, through the briars and brambles, a crowd of excited faces showed themselves.

The marquis was alone on the summit of the hill, visible from all points of the wood. He could hardly see those who called out his name, but he was visible to all of them. Had there been a thousand muskets in the wood, there he stood, a mark for all of them. All he could see through the interstices of the brushwood were glowing eyes eagerly fixed upon him. He pulled off his hat, turned up one of

the edges, and breaking off a long thorn from a bush near to him, drew a cockade from his pocket; he pinned cockade and brim back against the hat, then putting on the hat again, whose upturned brim showed his face and the white cockade, he shouted in a loud voice that rang through the forest, "I am the man whom you are seeking. I am the Marquis of Lantenac, the Viscount de Fontenay a Prince of Brittany, Lieutenant-General of the King. Come, finish your work. Present! Fire!" And tearing aside with both hands his coat of goatskin, he showed his bare chest, then casting down his eyes, expecting to meet a hostile array of levelled guns, he saw himself surrounded by a circle of kneeling men.

A tremendous shout rose up to the sky. "Long live Lantenac! Long live his lordship! Hurrah for the general!"

At the same moment hats were hurled into the air, sabres were waved in sign of delight, and from hundreds of spots in the underwood long staves were thrust forth, having on their ends caps of brown wool.

It was a Vendean band that had gathered round him.

All had thrown themselves on their knees directly they had caught sight of him.

There is a legend that tells that in the old Thuringian forests their exists a race of giants more or less human, that were considered by the Romans as frightful monsters, and looked upon by the Germans as a certain Divine incarnation, and who, according to those they met, were sometimes slaughtered and sometimes worshipped. The marquis experienced feelings somewhat similar to what one of these beings must have felt when expecting to be treated like a monster; he found himself suddenly looked on as a demi-god. All those eyes, gleaming with the fierce light of battle, fixed themselves on the marquis with a sort of wild and intense love.

This crowd of peasants was armed with muskets, sabres, scythes, pikes, and heavy cudgels; they all wore broad-brimmed felt hats, or brown woollen caps, with white cockades in them; they had on a number of rosaries; and amulets, loose breeches, open at the knee, goat-ski· coats, leather gaiters showing the bare calf, and long hair. Some of the men had a fierce expression of face, but all looked honest and true.

A young and handsome man passed through the kneeling ranks, and ascended the hill to the spot where the marquis stood. Like the peasants, he wore a felt hat with the brim turned up with a white cockade, and was clothed in the usual goat-skin jacket, but he had white hands, and a fine linen shirt on. Over his shoulder he wore a white silk scarf, from which hung a sword with a gilded guard. Arrived at the summit, he threw aside his hat, and taking off his sword and belt, presented them on his knees to the marquis. "We have been seeking for you, and now we have found you," said he; "here is your sword of command. These men are now yours; I was their commander, but now I take a higher rank in becoming one of your soldiers. Accept our homage, my lord. Give us your orders, general."

He then made a sign, and the men who carried the coloured flag emerged from the wood and laid the trophy at the feet of the marquis. This was the flag which he had seen through the trees.

"General," said the young man who had presented him with the sword and scarf, "this is the flag which we captured at the farm of Herbe en Pail. My lord, my name is Gavard. I am a connection of the Marquis de la Rouarie."

"It is well," answered the marquis, and calmly and gravely he put on the scarf. Then drawing the sword, and brandishing the bare blade over his head, he shouted, "To your feet! Long live the King!"

All started up, and the depths of the woods rang with the loud triumphant shout of "*Long live the King! Long live our marquis! Hurrah for Lantenac!*"

The marquis turned towards Gavard. "How many men have you with you?"

"Seven thousand."

Whilst they were descending from the little eminence, and the peasants were breaking down the briars to make way for the marquis, Gavard continued, "Nothing has been more simple than this, marquis.

It can be explained in a moment. A spark was only wanted to set all a-blazing. The Republican proclamation revealed your presence to the followers of the King in these parts. We were besides warned of your coming by the Mayor of Granville, who is one of us,—the same man who saved the Abbé Ollivier. Last night they sounded the tocsin."

"For whom was it rung?"

"For you."

"Ah!" remarked the marquis.

"And here we are," said Gavard.

"And there are seven thousand of you?"

"Yes, to-day. We shall be fifteen thousand to-morrow. It is a rising of the whole country. When Mons. Henry de La Rochejacquelin left for the Catholic army, they rang the tocsin, and in one night six parishes, Isernay, Corqueux, Echanbroignes, Aubiers, Saint Aubin, and Nueil, furnished him with ten thousand men. They had no ammunition, but they found in a mason's house sixty pounds of blasting powder, and they made a start with that. We felt sure that you were somewhere in the forest, and so we came to look for you."

"And you attacked the Blues in the farm of Herbe en Pail?"

"The wind had prevented them from hearing the tocsin, and they had no suspicions. The people of the village, who are mere boors, had received them well. This morning we surrounded the farm, the Blues were all asleep, and with a turn of the wrist the thing was done. I have a horse here; will you honour me by accepting it, general?"

"Yes."

A peasant led up a white horse with a military saddle and equipments on. The marquis, without availing himself of Gavard's aid, sprang into the saddle.

"Hurrah!" shouted the peasants, for the cries of the English are much used on the Breton coast, owing to the continued communication with the Channel Islands.

Gavard gave a military salute, and asked, "Where will be your headquarters general?"

"First in the forest of Fougères."

"That is one of your own seven forests, my lord marquis."

"We must have a priest."

"We have one."

"Who is it?"

"The Vicar of Chapelle Erbrée."

"I know him; he has visited Jersey."

A priest stepped out from the ranks, and replied, "Three times."

The marquis turned towards him. "Good-day, your reverence," said he; "you will soon have some work."

"All the better, marquis."

"You will have confessions to hear; that is, the confessions of those who wish to do so, for I force no one."

"My lord marquis," answered the priest, "Gaston at Guémenée compels the Republicans to confess themselves before execution."

"He is a mere barber," answered the marquis. "Death should be hampered with no restrictions."

Gavard, who had retired to issue some orders, now returned.

"General," said he, "I await your orders."

"First, then, headquarters will be in the Forest of Fougères; let the men disperse, and get there as best they can."

"That order has already been given."

"Did you not say that the inhabitants of Herbe en Pail had received the Blues well?"

"Yes, General."

"Have you burned the farm?"

"Yes."

"Have you burned the village?"

"No."

"Burn it then."

"The Blues made a fight of it, but they were only one hundred and fifty, and we were seven thousand."

"Where did these Blues come from?"

"They belonged to Santerre's command."

"The man who ordered the drums to be beaten at the time of the King's execution? Then it was a Parisian regiment?"

"Half a regiment."

"What is its name?"

"General, on the flag is written, 'The Regiment of the Red Cap.'"

"Savage beasts."

"What are we to do with the wounded Blues?"

"Finish them off."

"And with the prisoners?

"Shoot them."

"There are about eighty of them."

"Shoot them all."

"There are two women with them."

"Shoot them too."

"And three children."

"Bring them along with us; we will decide later on what to do with them."

And with these words the marquis rode on.

CHAPTER VII.

Mercy to none. (WATCHWORD OF THE REPUBLIC.)

No quarter. (WATCHWORD OF THE ROYALISTS.)

WHILST all these events were taking place at Tanis, the beggar had gone on towards Crollon. He had plunged into the ravines, under the vast silence of the foliage, inattentive to all and attentive to nothing, as he had said himself, a dreamer rather than a thinker, for the thinker has some object and the dreamer none; wandering and rambling about, now eating a morsel of wild sorrel, now drinking a draught of water from the brooks, raising his head every now and then as the sounds of battle reached his ears, but soon relapsing into the dazzling fascinations of nature, hearing perhaps the clamour of men, but listening to the song of the birds.

He was old and slow, and unable to go great distances; as he had told the Marquis of Lantenac, a quarter of a league fatigued him greatly. He made a short circuit in the direction of Croix Avranchin, and night had come on by the time that he had begun to retrace his steps.

A little below Macey, the path in which he was disengaged itself from the trees, and a wide field of vision was opened, comprising the whole stretch by the western horizon to the sea.

A column of smoke attracted his attention. There are harmless clouds of smoke, and others which are forerunners of misfortune. The denseness and colour of a smoke shows the difference between peace and war, between fraternity and hatred, between hospitality and the tomb. A smoke that curls over the tops of the trees may signify one of the most charming things in the world—the cottage fireside,—or one of the most terrible—a conflagration; and all the happiness and misery of mankind may be comprised in that vapour which is the plaything of the winds.

Tellmarch was much disturbed at the sight of this cloud of smoke. It was thick and black, with sudden flashes of red light through it, as though the fire that caused it burnt in an irregular manner, and was commencing to die out. The smoke was in the direction of Herbe en Pail. Tellmarch increased his pace, and directed his course towards the smoke. He was very tired, but he was desirous of knowing the meaning of it. He gained the side of a hill against which the farm and the hamlet lay, but there was no more farm, no more hamlet; a mass of smoking ruins was all that was left of Herbe en Pail.

It is far more sad to witness the burning of a cottage than of a palace. A cottage in flames is a lamentable sight. Devastation swoops down upon misery, the vulture pouncing down on the earthworm. There seems to be something against sense in it which compresses the heart.

If we believe in the Biblical legend, to look on at a conflagration changes a man for the moment into a statue. The spectacle upon which Tellmarch gazed had for a moment converted him into one, and the sight rooted him to the ground. All this destruction was going on in the most perfect silence. Not a cry was heard, not a human sigh rose with the smoke. The fiery furnace was at its work devouring the hamlet without a sound, save the snapping of the timbers and the crackling of the thatch. At intervals, as the smoke cleared away, the fallen roof revealed the yawning chambers. The furnace displayed all its ruby tints, rags turned to glowing scarlet, rickety furniture glowing with purple hues in crimson interiors, and Tellmarch grew giddy as he gazed upon the sinister gleams of misfortune and disaster.

Some chestnut trees, which grew close to the house, had taken fire, and were blazing away.

He listened attentively, trying to catch the sound of a voice, an appeal for help,

a cry, but nothing moved except the flames; everything was silent but the conflagration.

Had every one escaped?

Where were those who had lived and worked at Herbe en Pail? What had become of the children? Tellmarch descended the hill. A funereal enigma was before his eyes. He approached slowly, gazing eagerly before him. He moved towards the ruins with the lightness of a shadow. He felt like a phantom in this tomb. He had reached the door of the farm, and he looked into the courtyard, the walls of which had now fallen, and were no longer divided from the ruins of the village which surrounded it. The sight that he had seen before was a mere nothing; what caught his eye now was terrible, the reality appeared to him in all its horror. In the midst of the courtyard there was a dark heap vaguely outlined on one side by the flames, on the other by the moonlight. This heap was composed of men, and these men were all dead. Around this heap was a large puddle, with a little smoke clinging heavily to its surface. The glare of the conflagration was dimly reflected in this puddle, but there was no need of the hue of the flames to redden it, for it was blood.

Tellmarch drew nearer and examined the prostrate bodies, one after the other, —they were all dead. The moon and the conflagration both lighted up the scene.

The bodies were those of Republican soldiers. Their feet were all bare, for their boots had been taken away as well as their arms. They still wore their blue uniforms, and amidst the heaped up mass of limbs and heads he could perceive bullet-riddled hats with tricoloured cockades. These were all soldiers of the Republic, men of that Parisian regiment who the night before had been full of life, and had occupied the farmhouse of Herbe en Pail. These men had been judicially executed; they had been shot down in line, as was shown by the position of their bodies. Every man was dead; not a gasp or a death-rattle issued from that heap of slain.

Tellmarch examined the bodies one by one without omitting a single corpse; every one was riddled with bullets. The executioners, doubtless obliged to march hurriedly in some other direction, had not had time to bury them. As he was about to leave the illumined spot his eyes fell upon a low wall, which ran across the bottom of the courtyard, and he saw four feet extending just beyond the furthest angle of the wall. These feet were smaller, and had shoes on them. Tellmarch drew nearer; they were the feet of women.

Two women were lying side by side behind the wall; they, too, had been shot.

Tellmarch bent over them. One of the women was clothed in a sort of uniform; by the side of her was a broken canteen, without a drop of liquor remaining in it. She was a vivandière. She had four bullet holes in her head, and was quite dead. Tellmarch turned to the other; this was a peasant woman. Her face was livid, and her mouth gaping. Her eyes were closed, but she had no wound in her head; her dress, which hard work and constant moving about had reduced to tatters, was open in front, and disclosed her bust. Tellmarch threw it entirely back, and saw in one shoulder the blue mark of a bullet; the shoulder blade was broken. He glanced at the livid bosom. "A mother," murmured he, "and with a child at the breast."

He touched her gently; she was not yet cold. Tellmarch started up, and said in a loud voice, "Is there nobody there?"

"Is that you, Tellmarch the beggar?" whispered a voice in such low tones that it could hardly be heard, and at the same moment a head emerged from a portion of the ruins. Then a second face appeared from another part of the buildings.

Two peasants had hidden themselves there, the sole survivors of the massacre. The voice of the beggar had reassured them, and they had crept out of the holes in which they had sought refuge.

They advanced to Tellmarch, their limbs still quivering with terror.

Tellmarch could no longer utter a word, —his emotions had overpowered him,— but he pointed with his finger to the woman stretched at his feet.

"Is life still in her?" asked one of the peasants.

Tellmarch nodded his head in token of assent.

"Is the other woman alive?" demanded the second peasant.

Tellmarch made a sign in the negative.

The peasant who had been the first to venture from his hiding-place began, "The others are all dead, are they not? I saw it all. I was in my cellar. How I thanked God in those moments that I had no family. My house was in flames! Lord Jesus! They slaughtered every one. That poor woman had children, three little children. They cried out, 'Mother!' The mother shrieked, 'My children!' They murdered the mother, and carried off the children. I saw it all. My God! my God! Those who massacred them have gone away. They were satisfied with their work. They carried off the little children, and murdered the mother. But she is not dead, is she? She is not dead? Speak, beggar, do you think that we can save her? Shall we help to carry her into your lurking-place?"

Tellmarch managed to murmur "*Yes.*"

The farm bordered on the wood, and it was easy to procure materials for a litter, which was quickly made with leaves and branches. One peasant took the head, another the feet of the woman, whilst Tellmarch walked by her side feeling her pulse.

On the way the two peasants conversed, and over the blood-stained face of the woman, which was lighted up by the moon, they exchanged few words of terror and affright.

"To kill every one!"

"To burn everything!"

"Oh, gracious Father! are things to go on like this now?"

"It was the tall old man that ordered it."

"Yes, it is he who gave the orders."

"I did not see him when they shot them. Was he there?"

"No, he had gone away. But it is all the same; it was done by his orders."

"Then it is he who did it all?"

"He said, '*Kill, burn, no quarter.*'"

"He is a marquis."

"Certainly, he owns all this property."

"What is his name, then?"

"It is Monsieur de Lantenac."

Tellmarch raised his eyes to heaven, and murmured between his teeth, "Ah! if I had only known it!"

Second Part.—Paris.

BOOK I.

CIMOURDAIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE STREETS IN PARIS IN 1793.

Every one lived in public, people dined on tables arrayed before the doors. Women seated on the steps of the churches made lint whilst they sang the *Marseillaise*. The parks of Monceaux and the Luxembourg were given up as mill ponds. In all the thoroughfares the gunsmiths were at work, and manufactured muskets under the very eyes of the passers-by, who clapped their hands in token of delight. Upon every tongue were the same words, "*Patience, the Revolution is going on!*" Every one smiled courageously. People went to the theatre as they did at Athens during the Peloponnesian War. The bills posted up at the corners of the streets contained such notices as this:—*The Siege of Thionville. A Mother of a Family saved from the Flames. The Club of those who don't care. The Eldest Daughter of Pope Joan. The Military Philosopher. The Art of Love in a Village.*

The Germans were at the very gates, and there was a report that the King of Prussia had engaged a box at the Opera. Everything was a source of fear, and yet nobody was alarmed. The shadowy law against suspected persons, which was the criminal invention of Merlin of Douai, held the guillotine over the head of every one. A lawyer named Séran, who had been denounced, waited for the messengers of the law in his dressing-grown and slippers, playing the flute at his window. No one seemed to have any leisure, every one was in a hurry. Not a hat was to be seen without a cockade in it. The women said, "*We look well in a red cap.*" Paris appeared to be continually moving house. The dealers in curiosities were overcrowded with crowns, mitres, sceptres of gilded wood, ornamented with lilies, the plunder of the royal palaces. It was the demolition of the monarchy that was going on.

Copes and rochets were on sale at the second-hand clothes shops, on the pay-your-money and take-your-choice principle. At the Porcherons, and at Rampouneau's, men dressed in surplices and stoles, mounted on donkeys caparisoned with chasubles, drank common tavern wine from the sacramental cups. In the Rue Saint Jacques the bare-footed paviors stopped the barrow of a pedlar who had shoes for sale, collected money amongst themselves, and sent fifteen pairs of boots to the Convention, for the use of the army. Busts of Franklin, of Rousseau, of Brutus, and also, it must be added, of Marat, abounded. Above one of these busts of Marat, in the Rue Cloche Perce, was hung an address against Malouet in a black wooden frame, with a glass to it, with these lines in the margin,—

"*These details were supplied to me by the mistress of Silvain Bailly, a woman who loved her country, and had a liking for me.*"—MARAT.

The inscription on the fountain in the Palais Royal, "*Quantos effundit in usus,*" was concealed by two large canvases

painted in distemper, the one representing Cahier de Gerville denouncing to the National Assembly the rallying cry of the "Chiffonists" of Arles; the other, Louis XVI. brought back from Varennes in the royal carriage; a plank was made fast by cords under the carriage, and on each end of it was seated a grenadier with fixed bayonet. But few of the larger shops were open. Ambulating drapers and vendors of fancy goods used barrows, drawn by women and lighted by candles. Stalls were kept in the open air by ex-nuns in fair wigs. This workwoman mending stockings was a countess, that dressmaker had been a marchioness. Madame de Boufflers lived in a garret, from the windows of which she could catch a glimpse of her former mansion. Criers ran about offering papers containing the news of the day. The people called those who wore cravats up to their chins "*the scrofulous lot;*" wandering minstrels abounded. The crowd hooted the royalist poet Pitou, who had plenty of courage; he had been imprisoned twenty-two times, and was dragged before the revolutionary tribunal for slapping the tails of his coat when he uttered the word "*citizenship.*" When he, however, saw that his head was in danger, he exclaimed, "*But it is not my head that is guilty, but something quite the reverse,*" which made his judges laugh, and saved his life. This same Pitou satirised the fashion of Greek and Latin names. One of his most popular songs was about a cobbler whom he had named *Cujus*, and his wife, whose name was *Cujus-dam.* They danced the Carmagnole, and no longer said "gentleman" and "lady," but "citizen" and "citizeness." They danced in the ruined cloisters, with lamps on the altar, with two crossed sticks hung from the ceiling holding four candles, and vaults beneath their feet. They wore blue waistcoasts, which they termed "tyrant's" waistcoats. They had Cap of Liberty pins, made of red, blue, and white stones. The Rue de Richelieu was called the Rue de Loi. The Faubourg Saint Antoine had been renamed the Faubourg de Gloire. In the square of the Bastille there was a statue of Nature. People pointed out to each other certain well-known public characters, Chatelet, Didier, Nicolas, and Garnier Delaunay, who watched the door of the cabinet-maker Duplay; Voullant, who never missed one execution, and who, when following the tumbrils conveying the condemned, used to call it "*attending the red mass;*" Montflabert, a sworn Republican though a marquis, who insisted on being called "Tenth of August;" they watched the pupils of the military school march by, described by the decree of the Convention as "*Aspirants in the School of Mars,*" and by the populace as "*Robespierre's Pages.*"

They read Fréron's proclamation fulminated against those suspected of the heinous crime of "*negotiantism.*" The dandies gathered in groups at the doors of the town halls, and mocked at the brides and bridegrooms as they passed, crying out, "Married by municipal law!" At the Invalides the statues of the saints and the kings were crowned with Caps of Liberty.

They played cards on the curbs of all the principal thoroughfares, and the packs of cards also had had their full share of the revolution. The kings had been replaced by Genii, the queens by figures of Liberty, the knaves by Equalities, and the aces by representatives of the law. They had cultivated all the public gardens, and the plough was at work in the grounds of the Tuileries. Added to all these strange doings was mingled an utter disdain of life; this was most noticeable in the ranks of the conquered party. One man wrote to Touquin Tuiville, "*Have the kindness to release me from life; my address is as above.*" Champenetz was arrested for having in the Palais Royal shouted out, "When will there be a revolution in Turkey? I want to see the revolution *à la Porte!*"

There were newspapers everywhere. The hairdressers' assistants curled the wigs of the women in public whilst the master of the shop read the *Moniteur* aloud to them. Others, surrounded by eager groups, commented on the journal called "*Let us understand*" of Dubois Crancé, or the "*Trumpet of Father Bellicose.*" Sometimes the barbers also sold pork, and you saw hams and chitterlings hanging by the side of a dummy with her golden hair elegantly curled. Merchants sold in the

public streets "Emigrants' Wines." One man advertised wines of fifty-two different sorts. Others exhibited harp-shaped clocks and duchess-shaped sofas. One hairdresser had on his sign,—"I shave the clergy, I comb the nobility, I arrange the middle classes." People went to have their fortunes told with cards by a man called Martin at 173, Rue d'Anjou, formerly the Rue Dauphiné. Bread began to get scarce, then the supply of charcoal commenced to fail, then there was a lack of soap. Troops of milch cows began to come in from the country. At La Vallée lamb sold at fifteen francs the pound. An order issued by the Commune granted a pound of meat per head every ten days. They stood in long lines one behind each other at the doors of the shopkeepers. One of these lines has become historical; it extended from the door of a grocer in the Rue de Petit Carreau as far as the middle of the Rue Montorgueil. The slang term was "*holding the rope*," from those who were in the line holding a long rope in their hands as they stood one behind the other. In the midst of all this misery the women were courageous and gentle. They passed their nights in waiting for their turn at the bakers'. The Revolutionary Government resorted to various means to allay this universal distress; two of them succeeded, though they were very hazardous, the *assignat* and the *maximum*. The assignat was the lever, the maximum the point on which it worked. This empiricism saved France. The enemy at Coblenz, as well as the enemy in London, speculated on the assignats; girls came and went, offering for sale lavender water, garters, and plaited tresses of hair, and speculating in Government stock. There were jobbers at the corner of the Rue Vivienne, with muddy shoes, greasy hair, and fox-skin caps, and dandies from the Rue Valois, with varnished boots, a toothpick in their mouths, and hats with long nap, to whom the girls said "thee" and "thou." The people sometimes hunted these dandies, as they did the thieves, whom the Royalists termed "*active citizens*." There was, however, very little robbery. Men without shoes or stockings, and dying of hunger, passed the jewellers' shops in the Palais Égalité, with their eyes gravely cast down. In a domiciliary visit which the Faubourg Saint Antoine paid to the house of Beaumarchais, a woman picked a flower in the garden, and the crowd fell on her and beat her. Wood cost four hundred francs in silver the load. In the streets people could be seen sawing up their bedsteads. In winter the public fountains were frozen, and water cost twenty sous the pail. The gold louis was worth three thousand nine hundred and fifty francs. A cab fare was six hundred francs. After a day's drive, a dialogue like the following might be heard: "Coachman, how much do I owe you?" "Six thousand livres." A greengrocer sold twenty thousand francs' worth of goods in the course of the day. A beggar would say, "*For charity's sake assist me; I still want the hundred and thirty livres to pay for my shoes!*" At the entrance to the bridges were to be seen gigantic figures sculptured and painted by David, which were abused by Mercier—"*Enormous wooden Punches*" he called them. These gigantic figures represented Federalism and Coalition overthrown. The people never hesitated for a moment. They felt a sort of gloomy joy at having done with thrones for ever. Volunteers still flocked, in offering themselves as food for cannon. Each street almost raised a regiment. The flags of the different districts moved about each with its own motto. On that of the district of the Capucins was inscribed—"*No one can touch our beards.*" Upon another, "*No more nobility except in the heart.*" Upon all the walls were posted bills, great and small, white, yellow, green, and red, some printed, others written, upon which could be read the cry of "*Long live the Republic!*" Even the little children lisped "Ça ira!"

These little children had a great future before them.

Later on, to the city of tragedy succeeded the city of cynicism. The streets of Paris have displayed two distinct revolutionary aspects—before and after the 9th Thermidor. The Paris of Saint Just gave place to the Paris of Tallien. Such contradictions in the world are continual, —after Sinai came Courtille.

A time of political insanity now made its appearance. Such an epidemic had

broken out eighty years ago. The people came from under the rule of Louis XIV. as they did from under that of Robespierre —with every need to draw breath. From the Regency which opened the century, to the Directory which closed it. There were two Saturnalias after two Reigns of Terror. France seized the key, and fled from the puritanical cloister, with the same sense of relief that she had experienced in escaping from the monarchical one.

After the 9th Thermidor Paris was gay with a mad sort of gaiety. An unhealthy state of excitement abounded. To the frenzied desire to die succeeded a frenzied desire to live, and every one had a wish to eclipse his neighbour in grandeur. They had a Trimalcion, who called himself Grimod de la Reynière. The Almanach des Gourmands was published. People dined in the entresols of the Palais Royal to the sound of music, with orchestras of women beating drums and blowing trumpets. The dancing master reigned supreme with bow and fiddle in his hand. People supped in the Oriental fashion at Moté in the midst of vessels full of burning perfumes. The painter Boze drew heads of his daughters, charming innocent faces of sixteen *à la guillotine*, that is, with bare bosoms in red shirts. To the frantic dances in the ruined churches succeeded the balls of Ruggieri, of Lucquet Wenzel, of Mauduit, and of Montausier. Instead of the quiet women who had scraped lint appeared sultanas, female savages, and nymphs; to the bare feet of the soldiers, covered with blood, and mud, and dust, succeeded the bare feet of women glittering with diamonds. With shamelessness dishonesty crept in. In higher classes there were the contractors, in lower ones the common thief. A swarm of swindlers pervaded Paris, and every one had to keep an eye on his "*luc*," that is to say, his pocket-book. One of the pastimes of the day was to go to the Courts of Justice to see in the dock the female thieves.

On leaving the theatres, the street boys, opening the doors of cabs, would cry out, "Citizen and *citizeness, there is room for two.*" The news boys no longer shouted out the *Vieux Cordelier* and the *Ami du Peuple;* they now offered for sale the *Lettre de Polichinelle* and the *Petition des Galopins.* The Marquis de Sade presided at a Pike club in the Place Vendôme. The reaction was jovial, and yet brutal. The society of the *Dragone of Liberty* of '92 was resuscitated under the name of the *Knights of the Dagger.* At this period the type of Jocrisse made its appearance at the minor theatres. There were the "*Wonders*" both male and female, and after these came the "*Inconcevables.*" They invented strange and fantastic oaths, and fell from Mirabeau to Bobêche. It was thus that life came and went in Paris. It is the gigantic pendulum of civilisation; it extends from one pole to the other, from Thermopylæ to Gomorrah. After '93, the Revolution passed through a singular phase. The age seemed to forget to finish what it had begun. Some unknown orgy thrust itself into the foreground, and hurled back the terrible Apocalypse, cast a veil over the illimitable vision, and burst into a laugh at the terror it inspired. Tragedy disappeared in burlesque, and, rising from the distant horizon, the smoke of the carnival fires effaced the head of Medusa.

But in '93, the period of which we are writing, the streets of Paris still retained the grand yet savage appearance that they had shown from the commencement. They still possessed their orators like Varlet, who went about in a covered cart, from the top of which he harangued the passers-by; they had their heroes, too, one of whom was called "the Captain of the iron-shod Staves;" their favourites, such as Guffroy, the author of the pamphlet *Rougiff.* Some of these fancies were unhealthy, others the reverse. One amongst them was pure and honest, but fatal. It was Cimourdain.

CHAPTER II.

CIMOURDAIN.

CIMOURDAIN was influenced by the dictates of conscience, which were honest, though slightly tinged with melancholy. There was something determined in him. Men, like the heavens, can have their dark moments; there are times when everything grows black within them. Priesthood had

cast a gloom over Cimourdain. He who has once been a priest always remains one.

That which brings darkness into our ranks also gives us glimmerings of the stars. Cimourdain was full of virtues and truths, which shone all the more brilliantly for the darkness that surrounded them.

His history was a short one. He had been the village priest, and the tutor of a great house; then he inherited a small fortune, and was once more free.

Above all, he was firm. He only used the power of thought to compress matters together. He did not care about relinquishing an idea until he had sifted it to the very end; he thought matters out completely.

He knew all the European languages, as well as some Eastern ones. The man threw himself headlong into study and science, which enabled him to bear the burden of his celibacy, for nothing is more perilous than a life of constant repression.

As a priest, either from pride, or chance, or loftiness of spirit, he had clung to his vows, but he had been unable to retain his belief. Knowledge had destroyed his faith, and the dogmas of his Church had faded away from his heart.

When he looked into his soul, it seemed to him as if it had been in some sort mutilated, and not being able to throw off the priesthood, he had striven to recreate the man, but in a severe manner. The world had denied him a wife, and he had wedded humanity. All such gigantic plenitude has a void at the bottom.

In making him a priest, his parents, who were peasants, had wished to make him rise above the heads of the people,—his desire was to re-enter their ranks.

As love was forbidden him, he chose the part of hating. He hated falsehood, monarchy, theocracy, and his priestly robes. He loathed the present, and invoked the coming future with all his might. He gazed on all sufferers with the deepest feelings of pity. From a priest he had become a philosopher, and from a philosopher an atheist. Louis XV. was still alive when Cimourdain first felt that he was a Republican,—but of what Republic? Of the Republic of Plato, or of that of Draco? In his eyes, to put an end to human misery an avenger must arise who would also be a liberator. And he looked with ardent longing for the coming crash.

In 1789 it came, and found him prepared.

Cimourdain threw himself into this mighty regeneration of the human race with judgment, that is to say, for a mind cast in his mould, with the greatest decision. Logic knows no tender feelings. He lived through all the great revolutionary epochs, and heard the rustling of all the political breezes; in '89 the Fall of the Bastille, the end of the agonies of the people; in '90, on the 19th of June, the destruction of feudalism; in '91, Varennes, the end of royalty; in '92, the advent of the Republic. He had seen the rising of the Revolution, but was not the man to be startled by that giant; far from it. This sudden growth of everything had given him renewed life, for though already old —he was fifty years of age, and a priest ages sooner than other men—he was beginning to grow also. From year to year he had watched events tread closely one upon the heels of the other, and he had moved with them. He had at first dreaded that the Revolution would prove abortive, and had watched it carefully. It had right and reason on its side; he earnestly desired its success, and when others were losing confidence, he grew more and more certain. He wished that this Minerva, covered with the stars of the future, should also be a Pallas, with the snake-surrounded head of Medusa for a shield. He wished that her divine glance could, when the time came, hurl back on the demons their infernal light, and return them terror for terror.

With these strong desires he had come to the year 1793.

'93 is the war of Europe against France, and of France against Paris. It is the year of the victory of France over Europe, and of Paris over France. Hence the immensity of that terrible moment of '93, —mightier than all the rest of the century.

Nothing could be more tragic—Europe attacking France, and France attacking Paris, a drama that should be sung in epic verse.

'93 was a year of intensity. The storm was at the height of its rage and grandeur.

Cimourdain was quite at his ease. This wild and savage seething up of all matters into a common centre suited his powers of flight. The man had, like the sea-eagle, a fund of calm internal composure, mingled with a love of risk and danger. There are certain winged natures, calm but yet savage, made to battle with the tempests. Yes, such spirits of the storm exist. There was a wealth of pity in his nature, but it was reserved for the poor and helpless. Every species of their suffering wrung his heart, and he devoted himself body and soul to its amelioration. Nothing inspired him with repugnance, such was the goodness of his heart. He was divine in his kindness, however loathsome might be the sufferings that he endeavoured to alleviate. He would search for ulcers that he might kiss them. Fine deeds, hideous to the sight, are difficult to perform, but such deeds he preferred. One day, at the Hôtel Dieu, a man was dying, suffocated by a tumour in the throat, a fœtid and hideous abscess, very likely terribly contagious. It was necessary to empty it at once. Cimourdain happened to be there. Without a moment's hesitation he applied his lips to the tumour and drew out the matter, rejecting it from his mouth as it became full. The abscess was emptied and the man saved. As he was then wearing his priest's gown, one of the bystanders said to him, "If you had done that for the King you would have been made a bishop." "I would not have done it for the King," replied Cimourdain. The deed and the answer soon spread through the poorest parts of Paris. The good that he did gave him great influence with those who suffered, wept, and threatened. At the time of the hostile feeling against monopolists, a feeling which caused many errors, it was Cimourdain who by a single word prevented the pillage of a boat-load of soap at port Saint Nicolas, and he also dispersed the angry crowd that was stopping the carriages at the barrier of Saint Lazare.

It was Cimourdain who, ten days after the 10th of August, persuaded the people to throw down the statues of the Kings. In the Place Vendôme a woman called Reine Violet was crushed by the statue of Louis XIV., to the neck of which she had attached a cord which she was pulling at. This statue had been standing on its pedestal for just a hundred years, for it was erected on the 12th of August, 1692, and thrown down on the 12th of August, 1792. In the Place de la Concorde a man named Guenguerlot having called the destroyers "*rabble*," was beaten to death on the pedestal of the statue of Louis XV., and the statue itself broken in pieces. Later on it was coined into sous. The arm alone escaped. It was the right arm, which the King was extending with the air of a Roman Emperor. It was at the instigation of Cimourdain that the people granted, and a deputation presented, this arm to Latude, the man who had been for thirty-seven years buried alive in the Bastille. When Latude, with an iron collar about his neck, and a chain round his loins, was perishing by inches in the prison into which he had been cast by that King whose statue towered above Paris, who would have prophesied that that prison would fall, and that statue be broken to atoms? that the prisoner would be released from the tomb to make way for the monarchy, and that the captive should become the master of that hand of bronze which had signed the warrant for his imprisonment, and that of that King of clay, nothing should remain but a brazen arm?

Cimourdain was one of those men who possessed an inner voice, to the dictates of which he listened. Are such men absent-minded, or are they attentive?

Cimourdain was at the same time full of knowledge and full of ignorance. He knew the sciences thoroughly, but was ignorant of real life. He had a bandage over his eyes, like the Themis of Homer's poem. He possessed the instinct of the arrow, which, though blind, flies with unerring accuracy to the centre of the target. In revolutions there is nothing so dangerous as a straight line. Cimourdain went straight in front, full of fatal determination. Cimourdain believed that in a social Genesis the extremest point is the most solid resting-place. This is a mistake common to all minds relying on logic. He went beyond the Convention, beyond the Commune; he was a member of the Évêche.

The society which is known as the Évêche, because the members met in one of the rooms of an ex-episcopal palace, was rather a complication of men than a reunion. At its meetings were to be found those silent but significant lookers-on, of whom Garat said, "They have as many pistols as they have pockets." The Evêche was a strange mixture, a mixture of cosmopolitans and Parisians, which excluded nobody. Paris is the spot where the heart of the people beat. The whole social warmth of plebeianism was to be found at the Évêche. By the side of the Évêche, the Convention was cold and the Commune chill. The Évêche was one of those outcomes of the Revolution like volcanic eruptions. In the Évêche was to be found everything,—ignorance, stupidity, honesty, heroism, anger, and last but not least, spies. Brunswick had his agents there. There were men in it worthy to have been citizens of Sparta, and men deserving of the gallows. The greater portion of the members were honest enthusiasts. The party of the Gironde had uttered, by the lips of Isnard, the temporary president of the Convention, these outrageous words,—

"*Have a care, citizens of Paris. Not one stone of your city will remain on another, and one day they shall seek in vain for the spot upon which Paris stood.*" This speech had startled the Évêche, and as we have just said, men of all nationalities had felt it their duty to group themselves round Paris. Cimourdain had joined them. These men acted against the reactionists. The society was born out of that public need of violence which forms the secret and redoubtable side of revolutions. Fortified by this strength, the Évêche had at once taken its proper place. In the disturbances of Paris it was the Convention that fired the cannon, but the Évêche that gave the signal.

In his implacable ingenuity, Cimourdain believed that everything in the service of truth is fair, and it was this that enabled him to rule men with extreme views. Rogues believed that he was an honest man, and felt satisfied. Crime is flattered by being ruled by virtue. Palloy, the architect, who had turned a penny by the demolition of the Bastille, and sold the stones for his own profit, and who, when ordered to colour the walls of the prison of Louis XVI., in an access of zeal ornamented them with bars, fetters, and iron collars; Gouchon, the suspected orator of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, whose receipts were afterwards found; Fournier the American, who on the 17th of July fired a pistol at Lafayette; Henriot, who had been released from the Bicêtre, and who had been a valet, a mountebank, a robber, and a spy, before becoming a general, and turning the guns on the Convention; La Regnier, formerly the Grand Vicar of Chartres, who used *Le Père Duchesne* in the place of his breviary;—all of these respected Cimourdain, and where it was necessary to keep them in their place, it was sufficient for them to feel themselves in the presence of his much-dreaded candour.

It was in this manner that Saint Just terrified Schneider. At the same time the majority of the members of the Évêche, which was composed of poor men of violent principles, but who meant well, believed in Cimourdain, and were ready to follow him anywhere. He had as his curate, or rather aide-de-camp, another Republican priest called Danjou, popular with the people on account of his height, whom they had nicknamed "*Abbé Sixfoot.*" Cimourdain could have led where he liked that valiant partisan called General Pike, that intrepid Truchon, known as Great Nicholas, who had endeavoured to save Madame de Lamballe; he had offered her his arm to assist her in stepping over the dead bodies, and would have succeeded in his efforts had it not been for the savage joke of Charlot the barber.

The Commune watched the Convention, the Évêche kept an eye on the Commune. Cimourdain, who was naturally a straightforward man, and detested underhand work, had more than once broken the mysterious threads grasped by the fingers of Pache, whom Beurnonville called the "Black Man." Cimourdain was on intimate terms with all the members of the Évêche. Dobsent and Momoro consulted him. He talked Spanish with Gusman, Italian with Pio, English with Arthur, Flemish with Peregra, and German with Proly the Austrian, who was a prince's

bastard. Where there had been discordant elements he produced harmony. He had an unrecognised but a powerful position. Hébert was afraid of him.

Cimourdain was looked upon as a man of inexorable disposition at that time amongst these tragic groups. He was a man without weaknesses, who believed himself to be infallible. No one had ever seen a tear in his eye. His virtue was of that cold kind that cannot be got at. He was a living personification of Justice itself.

There was no middle course for a priest in the time of the Revolution. A priest could only cast in his lot with such men, either from the highest or the lowest motives—he must be sublime or infamous. Cimourdain was sublime, but then he stood alone, inaccessible to all, in an inhospitable position surrounded by a circle of precipices. The highest peaks possess this sinister virginity.

Cimourdain had all the appearance of an ordinary man. He was negligently clothed in shabby garments. He had worn the tonsure, as he got older he grew bald. The little hair remaining to him was grey, his forehead was broad and lofty, and on it the observer could read his character. His speech was rough, impassioned, and solemn; his mouth was sad, and a bitter expression often hovered on his lips; his manner was commanding; his eyes deep and clear, and his whole face in general wore an expression of anger.

Such was Cimourdain. No one now even knows his name. History possesses many of these terrible unknowns.

CHAPTER III.

THE PART THAT WAS NOT DIPPED IN THE STYX.

Was such a man a man? Could the slave of the human race have a place in his heart for affection? Had he not too much soul to possess a heart? Could that universal love which he professed for all and everything restrict itself to a single affection? Was it in the power of Cimourdain to love? Let us answer the question at once. It was.

When he was young he had been tutor in an almost princely mansion, and there he had a pupil, the son and heir of the noble family, and he loved the boy fondly. It is so easy to love a child. How is it possible not to forgive a child almost everything? You can pardon his being a lord, a prince, even a king. The innocence of childhood makes you forgive even the crime of nobility. His very helplessness makes you forget the exaggeration of his rank. He is so small that you can pass over his high birth. Even a dependant can forgive him for being the master. The old negro loves the white child of which he has charge. Cimourdain simply adored his pupil. Childhood has a certain charm about it that enables you to exhaust all your love upon it. All the love that existed in Cimourdain's nature was concentrated on the child. This sweet, innocent soul had become, as it were, a necessity to a heart which had been condemned to beat alone without any response. It was his son; not the child of his flesh, but of his spirit. He was not its father, it was not his work, but he was the master, and it was the creation of his hands. He had made a man of this little lordling; who knows even if he had not made a great man of him? He could indulge in such dreams. Has one need of the permission of a family to create an intelligence, a will, a noble character? He had imparted to the young viscount, his pupil, all that spirit of progress with which his own heart was filled. He had inoculated him with all the essence of his virtues. He had infused in his veins his convictions, his conscience, his ideal, and in the brain of the aristocrat he had poured the soul of the people. This deep spiritual paternity bound Cimourdain firmly to his pupil. The mere sight of the child softened his heart.

And to this must be added that it was easy for him to take a father's place, for the child was an orphan; his father and mother were dead, his grandmother was blind, and his grandfather had left the country. The grandmother died; his grand-uncle, the head of the family, a man of rank, holding a high position in the

army, with a post at the court, fled from the dulness of the family castle, lived at Versailles, made campaigns with the army, and left the orphan alone in the solitary mansion. The tutor therefore became the master in the fullest acceptation of the word.

Cimourdain had watched over the child from his birth, and he had been his pupil from his earliest years. When quite young the orphan had been attacked by a dangerous illness. Cimourdain had watched by his bedside day and night; it is the physician who prescribes, but it is the nurse who saves life. Cimourdain had without doubt saved his life. Not only did his pupil owe knowledge, education, and science to him, but he was, in addition, indebted to him for health and life. We love those who owe us much, and Cimourdain adored the boy.

The inevitable separation came about at last; when the education was completed, Cimourdain had to quit his pupil, now become a young man. With what cold-blooded cruelty these separations take place. With what indifference families dismiss the tutor who leaves his spirit in his pupil, and the woman who has given all her love to her nursling. Cimourdain was paid and dismissed; he left the great world, and returned to a lower grade of society. The barrier had been erected between the lofty and the lowly. The young lord, an officer from his very birth, gazetted a captain at the outset of his career, had started for some distant garrison; the humble tutor, already in his heart a discontented priest, had to descend to the lower grades occupied by the inferior clergy, and lost sight of his pupil.

The Revolution had burst forth and the recollection of that child of whom he had made a man still stirred within him, hidden but not extinguished by the vastness of the public affairs into which he had plunged.

To model a statue, and to impart life to it, is a fine thing, but to mould an intelligence, and to plant in it the spirit of truth, is still finer. Cimourdain was the Pygmalion of a soul.

A soul may be the father of a child.

This pupil, this boy, this orphan, was the only being upon earth that he really cared for.

But would such a man prove vulnerable even in an affection like this?

We shall see as we go on.

BOOK II.

THE TAVERN IN THE RUE DU PAON.

CHAPTER I.

MINOS, EACUS, AND RHADAMANTHUS.

THERE was a tavern in the Rue du Paon which termed itself a coffee-house. This tavern has a back room, which has now become historical. It was there that men high in the affairs of the Republic would sometimes meet for the purpose of having a conference, for with every eye upon them it was difficult to meet in a more public place. It was there that on the 23rd of October 1792 the famous kiss was exchanged between the parties of the Mountain and the Gironde. It was there that Garat, although he does not mention it in his famous memoirs, came for information on that melancholy night, when, after having deposited Clavière in a place of security in the Rue du Beaune, he stopped his carriage in the Pont Royal to listen to the pealing of the tocsin.

On the 28th of June, 1793, three men were seated round a table in their back room. They were not sitting side by side, but at different parts of the table, leaving a fourth chair vacant. It was about eight o'clock in the evening, and it was still light in the street, but it was dark in the back room, and a lamp suspended from the ceiling lighted the table.

The first of these three men was young, pale, and solemn, with thin lips, and a

cold expression of countenance. There was a nervous contraction of the cheek, which seemed to render it difficult for him to smile. He was powdered, gloved, brushed, and buttoned up to the chin. There was not a crease in his coat, which was made of light blue cloth. He had on a pair of nankeen breeches, white stockings, a high cravat, a frilled shirt-front, and shoes with silver buckles. Of the two other men, one was a species of giant, and the other a kind of dwarf. The tall man was untidily dressed in a large scarlet coat, his neck was almost bare, and the ends of his cravat hung carelessly down over the bosom of his shirt. His waistcoat was half-opened, many of the buttons being missing. He wore top boots, and his hair was in disorder, and though there were traces of its having been dressed and powdered, it looked like a horse's mane. He was much pitted with smallpox, and had a line between his eyes denoting a violent temper, but with a good-natured expression about the mouth, thick lips, large teeth, the fist of a porter, and eyes that blazed with a brilliant flame. The small man had a sallow complexion. When seated he appeared to be deformed, his head was thrown back, his eyes were bloodshot, and there were livid spots on his face. He wore a handkerchief tied over his greasy hair, which was flattened down on his head; he had hardly any forehead, a terrible and enormous mouth. He wore trousers and slippers, a waistcoat which seemed to have been once composed of black satin, and over this a loose jacket, a straight line in which betrayed the lurking-place of a hidden dagger.

The first of these men was called Robespierre, the second Danton, and the third Marat. They were alone in the room. On the table before Danton was a cobwebbed-covered bottle, and a glass reminding one of Luther's beer tankard, before Marat a cup of coffee, before Robespierre some documents. Near the papers was one of those heavy leaden inkstands which those who were at school at the commencement of the present century will easily remember. By the side of the inkstand was a pen. Upon the papers a heavy copper seal had been carelessly thrown, on which could be read *Pallay fecit*, and on which was engraved an exact model of the Bastille.

A map of France occupied the centre of the table. Outside the door the watch-dog of Marat kept guard. This was a certain Laurent Boue, a commissionaire living at No. 18, Rue des Cordelières, who on the 15th of July, just fifteen days from this 28th of June, was to strike over the head with a chair a girl called Charlotte Corday, who was at that moment at Caen dreaming vaguely over her plans. Laurent Boue was the man who carried the proofs to the office of the *Ami du Peuple*. This evening he had been brought by his master to the tavern in the Rue du Paon, with orders to keep the door of the room in which Marat, Robespierre, and Danton were sitting, closed, and to allow no one to enter except members of the Committee of Public Safety, of the Commune, or of the Évêche. Robespierre did not desire to exclude Saint Just, Danton, Pache, Marat, and Gusman.

The conference had already lasted for a long time. It was a discussion upon the papers spread upon the table which Robespierre had been reading. The voices of the men commenced to grow louder; there was an ill-feeling between the three. From outside outbursts of language could be heard every now and then. At this period the proceedings of public tribunals had given the right of eavesdropping. It was at this time that the copyist Fabricius Pâris, looking through the keyhole, saw what the Committee of Public Safety were doing. This, it may be remarked, was not without its use, for it was Pâris who warned Danton on the night of the 13th of March, 1794. Laurent Boue had applied his ear to the door of the back room in which were Robespierre, Danton, and Marat. Laurent Boue served Marat, but he was a member of the Évêche.

CHAPTER II.

MAGNA TESTANTUR VOCE PER UMBRAS.

DANTON rose to his feet, and pushed back his chair violently. "Listen," cried he, "there is only one thing that is urgent—the Republic is in danger. I only know

one duty—that is, to free France from her enemies. Every measure calculated to bring that about is a good one. All, all, all! When I am in the face of extreme danger, I have recourse to every method, and when I fear everything I brave everything. My thought is like a lion. No half measures, no prudery in revolution, Nemesis is no laggard. Let us be terrible, and useful at the same moment. Does the elephant look where he puts down his foot? Let us crush the enemy!"

Robespierre calmly, "Certainly, certainly;" then he added, "The question is to know where the enemy is."

"He is outside, where I have driven him," replied Danton.

"He is inside, where I am watching him," said Robespierre.

"I will drive him away again," returned Danton.

"You cannot drive away an enemy that is within your gates."

"What is to be done with him then?"

"Exterminate him."

"I agree to that," said Danton in his turn; then he continued, "I tell you, Robespierre, that he is outside."

"Danton, I tell you that he is close at hand."

"Robespierre, he is in the frontier."

"Danton, he is in La Vendée."

"Be calm," broke in a third voice; "he is everywhere, and you are lost."

It was Marat who spoke.

Robespierre looked at Marat, and began again calmly, "A truce to generalities; I particularise, here are facts."

"Pedant!" muttered Marat.

Robespierre placed his hand upon the papers spread out before him, and continued,

"I have just read you the despatches of Prieur of the Marne, and also communicated the information furnished by Gélambre. Listen, Danton, foreign war is a mere nothing, civil war is everything. Foreign warfare is a scratch on one's elbow, civil war is an ulcer that preys on the liver. From all that I have read to you, we only arrive at one result. La Vendée, up to this time divided into various scattered bands, under different chiefs, is now about to concentrate itself. It will now have only one general."

"Yes, one central brigand," murmured Danton.

"That general," continued Robespierre, "is the man who disembarked near Pontorson on the 2nd of June. You have seen who that was. Note well that his disembarkation coincides exactly with the arrest of the representatives Prieur of the Côte d'Or and Romme, at Bayeux, by the treacherous district of Calvados on the 2nd of June, on the very same day."

"And their transmission to the castle of Caen," said Danton.

Robespierre continued:—"I resume the reading of the despatches. The Forest War is to be organised on a grander and more extended scale. An attack by the English is in preparation; Vendeans and English—that is, Bretons and Britons. The Hurone of Finisterre speak the same language as the Topinambons of Cornouailles. I have placed before your eyes an intercepted letter of Puisaye, where he says that 'Twenty thousand red coats distributed amongst the insurgents will raise an army of a hundred thousand men.' When the revolt of the peasantry is complete the English expedition will land. Here is their plan of action; follow it on the map." Robespierre traced the route on the map with his finger, and continued: "The English can choose their landing-point from Cancale to Paimpol. General Craig prefers the Bay of Saint Brieuc, Cornwallis the Bay of Saint Cast. This, however, is a mere detail. The left bank of the Loire is held by the rebel Vendean army, and as to the twenty-eight leagues of open country between Amiens and Pontorson, forty Norman parishes have promised to hold it. The attack can be made on three points, Plérin, Iffiniac, and Pléneuf; from Plérin they will move on Saint Brieuc, from Pléneuf to Lamballe; on the third day they will reach Dinan, where there are nine hundred English prisoners, and at the same time they will occupy Saint Jouan and Saint Méen; they will leave some cavalry there; on the third day two columns will move, one in Jouan on Bedée, and the other in Dinan on Becheril, which is a naturally fortified position; there they will establish two batteries. On the fourth day they are at Rennes, and Rennes is the key of Brittany. They who

hold Rennes hold everything. Rennes once taken, Châteauneuf and Saint Malo must fall. At Rennes there are a million of cartridges, and fifty field-pieces."

"Which they will seize on at once," muttered Danton.

Robespierre went on. "I am now nearly at the end. From Rennes three columns will be thrown out, one on Fougères, the other on Vitré, the other on Redon. As the bridges have been destroyed, the enemy will furnish themselves —you have seen these facts stated precisely—with pontoons and planks, and they will have guides to point out the fords for the cavalry. From Fougères they will branch off to Avranches, from Redon to Ancenis, from Vitré to Laval. Nantes will yield, Brest will yield. Redon captured, will give command of the whole course of the Vilaine, Fougères, the high-road to Normandy, and Vitré, that of Paris. In fifteen days they will have an army of brigands three hundred thousand strong, and all Brittany will belong to the King of France!"

"That is to say, to the King of England," remarked Danton.

"No, to the King of France," returned Robespierre; adding, "the King of France is worse. It takes fifteen days to drive out the foreigners, and eighteen hundred years to get rid of a monarchy."

Danton, who had sat down again, placed his elbows on the table, and rested his head in his hands in an attitude of profound thought.

"You see the danger," said Robespierre. "Vitré opens the road to Paris to the English."

Danton lifted up his head and struck his heavy hands on the map as though on an anvil. "Robespierre," said he, "did not the possession of Verdun open the road to Paris to the Prussians?"

"Well?"

"Well, we will drive out the English as we drove out the Prussians," and Danton rose to his feet again. Robespierre placed his cold fingers on the feverish hand of Danton.

"Danton," said he, "the inhabitants of Champagne were not in favour of the Prussians, whilst the Bretons are friendly to the English. To recapture Verdun was a foreign war, to recapture Vitré will be a civil one." And Robespierre added in a cold deep voice, "A serious difference, indeed!" Then he continued, "Sit down again, Danton, and look at the map instead of banging it about with your fists."

But Danton was engrossed in his own thoughts.

"It is too much," said he, "to look for trouble in the west when it is in the east. I grant, Robespierre, that England threatens us by sea, that Spain is moving on the Pyrenees, Italy on the Alps, and Germany on the Rhine, and at the bottom of all is the Great Russian Bear. Danger encloses us in a circle of which we are the central point. Outside, a hostile alliance; inside, treachery. In the south Servant half opens the gates of France to the King of Spain. In the north Dumouriez has gone over to the enemy. For that matter he always threatened Holland less than he did France. Nerwinde effaces the victories of Jemmapes and Valmy. Robert Saint Etienne, traitor and Protestant that he is, is in correspondence with the courtier Montesquiou. The army is decimated. There is not a regiment more than four hundred strong. The valiant battalion of Deux Ponts is reduced to one hundred and fifty men. The camp at Pamars has surrendered. At Givet there are not more than five hundred sacks of flour. We are falling back on Landau. Wurmser is pressing Kléber hard. Mayence, after fighting bravely, has succumbed; Valenciennes as well, whilst Condé has played the coward. This, however, does not prevent Chancel, who defended Valenciennes, and old Féraud, who commanded at Condé, from having acted like heroes; so has Mensier, who was at the head of affairs at Mayence. But everywhere else we have been betrayed. D'harville at Aix-la-Chapelle, Mouton at Bruges, Valence at Breda, Neuilly at Lembourg, Miranda at Maerstricht, Stengel, Lanau, Ligonnier, Menau, and Dillon,—all traitors, seduced by the vile money of Dumouriez. We must make examples. I suspect treachery in Custine's countermarches, I suspect Custine of preferring the lucrative capture of Frankfort to the useful one of Coblentz. Frankfort, you say, can pay four millions towards the war expenses; be it so, but

what is that in comparison to the crushing of a nest of emigrants? It is treason, I exclaim. Meunier died on the 13th of June. Kléber is left alone. In the meantime Brunswick gathers strength and moves forward. He hoists the German banner over all the places on French soil that he occupies. The Margrave of Brandenbourg is to-day the arbiter of the destinies of Europe. He is seizing our provinces. He will make himself a present of Belgium next, as you will see. Europe might say that we were doing Berlin's work. If this goes on, and we do not take some decisive step, the French Revolution will have been enacted merely for the benefit of Potsdam, and its only result will have been to magnify the petty state of Frederic II. We shall have killed the King of France to benefit the King of Prussia." And Danton burst into a peal of terrible laughter.

At Danton's laugh a smile hovered over Marat's face. "Each of you has your hallucination," said he; "yours, Danton, is Prussia, yours, Robespierre, La Vendée. Now I, in my turn, am going to speak to facts. You do not see the real danger, but here it is, in the coffee-houses and the gambling saloons. The Café Choiseul is Jacobin; the Café Pantin is Royalist; the Café du Rendez-vous attacks the National Guard; the Café de la Porte Saint Martin defends it; the Café de la Régence is opposed to Brissot; the Café Corazza is for him; the Café Procope swears by Diderot; the Café du Théâtre Français pins its faith in Voltaire. At the Rotonde they tear up the assignats; the cafés of Saint Martin are angry; the Café Manouri discusses the question of flour; at the Café Foy they are always at fisticuffs; at the Perron the hornets of finance buzz. Now this is a serious matter."

Danton laughed no longer. Marat still smiled. The smile of a dwarf is more dangerous than the laugh of a giant.

"You are deceiving yourself, Marat," growled Danton.

Marat gave that convulsive movement of the hip for which he was celebrated, and his smile died away at once. "Ah!" said he, "I recognise you there, Citizen Danton. It is you who in a full meeting of the Convention spoke of me as '*That individual Marat.*' Listen, I forgive you. We are spending our time foolishly. Ah! I deceive myself, do I? What sort of a man am I, in point of fact? Have I not denounced Chazot, Petiori, Kersaint, Moreton, Dufriche Valazé, Ligonnier, Menou, Bauneville, Gensonné, Biron, Lidon, and Chambon? Was I in the wrong? I can scent out treason in the traitor, and I think it wise to denounce the villain before he has power to perpetrate his crime. It is my habit to say to-night what you will not even think of until to-morrow. I am the man who submitted to the Assembly a perfect scheme of Criminal Legislation. What have I done up to the present? I have demanded that they should instruct the sections, so as to bring them to the revolutionary discipline. I have broken the seals of thirty-two official boxes. I reclaimed the diamonds that had been left in the hands of Roland. I moved that the Brissotins had given to the Committee of Public Safety warrants for arrest in blank. I pointed out the omissions that Lindet had made in his list of Capet's crimes. I noted the execution of the tyrant in twenty-four hours. I defended the conduct of the Regiments of Mauconseil and of the Republic. I prevented the letters of Narbonne and Malouet from being read. I brought in a bill for the assistance of the wounded soldiers. I suppressed the Commission of the Six. I foresaw the treachery of Dumouriez in the affair at Mons. I demanded that they should seize one hundred thousand relatives of the emigrants as hostages for the Commissioners delivered up to the enemy. I proposed that every representative who passed the barriers should be declared a traitor. I unmasked the faction of the Rolandists in the Marseilles affair. I insisted that a price should be set on the head of the son of Egalité. I defended Bouchotte. I called for a nominal appeal to drive Isnard from his seat. I put forward a motion that the Parisians had deserved well of their country, and that is why I am called a dancing jack by Louvet. Fenesteré demands my expulsion. The town of Loudun desires my exile. The town of Amiens wishes me to be muzzled. Cobourg votes for my arrest, and Lecomte Puiraveau proposes that the Convention

should pass a vote declaring me to be insane. Aha, Citizen Danton, why did you ask me to your conference if it was not to listen to my opinion? Did I ask you to come here? Very far from that, indeed. I have no taste for a private sitting with counter-revolutionists like you and Robespierre. But I shall have to bide my time, for you have not understood me, Robespierre no more than you, and you no more than Robespierre. There is not a man here that understands politics properly. You have to be taught the very rudiments, even to the placing the dots on the i's. What I have said to you both amounts to this. You are both equally in error; the danger is not in London, as Robespierre thinks, not at Berlin, as Danton believes. It is here, in Paris. It is in the absence of unity, in the right that each one has to go his own way, commencing by you two, in the veiling of minds, in the anarchy of will——"

"Anarchy," interrupted Danton, "who preaches anarchy if it is not you?"

Marat took no heed. "Robespierre, Danton, the peril lies in that heap of coffee-houses, in that collection of gambling tables, in that mass of clubs, the Club Noir, the Liberal Club, the Ladies' Club, the Impartial Club, which dates from Clermont Tonnerre, and was the Monarchical club of 1790, a social circle founded by the priest Claude Fauché; the Woollen Cap Club, founded by the gazetteer Prudhomme, and a thousand others, without counting your club, Robespierre—the Jacobins—or yours, Danton—the Cordeliers. The danger comes from the famine which made the market porter Blin hang up to the lamppost of the Hôtel de Ville the baker of the market of Palu, François Denis, and from the justice which hung the porter Blin for hanging the baker Denis. The danger lies in the depreciation of the paper currency.

"In the Rue de Temple an assignat was lying on the ground,—it was one for a hundred francs,—and a passer-by, one of the people, said, '*It is not worth while stooping to pick it up.*' The stock-jobbers and the speculators are a source of danger. Hang out the black flag at the Hôtel de Ville—a fine step in advance that! You have arrested Baron Trenck. What good is that? Twist the neck of that vile old intriguer of prisons. You fancy that you have escaped from a difficulty because the President of the Convention places a civic crown upon the head of Labertèche, who received forty-one sabre wounds at Jemmappes, and of whom Chenier makes himself—well, what shall I say?—the *mahaut.* Farce, and sleight of hand. Ah! it is not you that will look closely at home, at Paris. You hunt up danger, believing it is far away, when it is at your very doors. Robespierre, I ask you what is the use of your police? For do not tell me that you have not your secret service men,—Pazan at the Commons, Coffenhall at the Revolutionary Tribunal, David at the Committee of Public Safety, Couthon at the Committee of General Safety. Can you not see that the peril is at your very feet? They plot, and plot, and plot. The passers-by in the streets read the daily papers and nod their heads to each other. Six thousand men without certificates of citizenship, returned emigrants, Muscadins, and Mathevons, are lurking in cellars, in attics, in the wooden galleries of the Palais Royal. The people form long lines in front of the bakers' shops, the women stand in the doorways, clasp their hands, and exclaim, 'When shall we have peace once more?' You are at perfect liberty to lock yourselves up as much as you like in the audience chamber of the Executive Council, so that you may not be disturbed. Every word uttered there is known; and as a proof of this, listen, Robespierre; these are the very words that you addressed last night to Saint Just—'*Barbaroux is getting fat; that will be awkward for him when he wants to make a bolt of it.*' Yes, the danger is on all sides, but above all in the midst of us. In Paris those of the former party are plotting, whilst true patriots are going barefooted. The aristocrats arrested on the 9th of June have already been released. The carriage horses, which ought to have been harnessed to the guns in the frontier, spatter us with mud in the streets. A four-pound loaf of bread costs three francs, twelve sous. The theatres play indecent pieces, and Robespierre will have Danton guillotined."

"Hulloa!" cried Danton.

Robespierre fixed his eyes upon the map which lay on the table before him.

"What we really require," exclaimed Marat roughly, "is a Dictator."

Robespierre raised his head. "I know that, Marat," said he; "you or I?"

"I or you," returned Marat.

Danton muttered between his teeth, "A Dictator! Let them just try it!"

Marat noticed the frown that darkened Danton's face. "Hold," said he, "let me make one last effort. The position that we are in is worth the trouble. Remember, we worked together on the day of the 31st of May. The whole question is much more serious than that relating to the Girondist faction, which was a mere matter of detail. There is an element of truth in what you both have said, but it is the truth, and nothing but the truth, that I state. In the South we were all threatened with Federalism, in the West by Royalism, in Paris there is the fratricidal quarrel between the Convention and the Commune, in the frontier the treason of Dumouriez, and the retreat of Custine. And to what does all this lead? To the dismemberment of the Republic. What, then, must we do? There is only one course, and that is—*Unity*. In this there is safety, and we must make every effort to reach it. Paris must place herself at the head of the Revolution. Let us lose but an hour, and the Vendéans may be at Orleans the next day, and the Prussians in Paris. In this I agree with you, Danton; in the former I am with you, Robespierre. Let it be so. Well, my conclusion is a Dictatorship. Let us seize this Dictatorship, we three who represent the whole revolution. We are the three heads of the dog Cerberus. One talks, that is you, Robespierre; one barks, that is you, Danton."

"The other bites," said Danton; "that is you, Marat, eh?"

"All three bite," said Robespierre.

There was a silence; then a conversation full of veiled threats commenced.

"Listen, Marat; before taking part with you, we must understand each other. How did you manage to find out what I said to Saint Just?"

"That is my affair, Robespierre."

"Marat!"

"It is my duty to find out things, and it is my business to make myself acquainted with everything."

"Marat!"

"I like to know everything."

"Marat!"

"Robespierre, I know what you said to Saint Just, as I know what Danton said to Lacroix; I know what passes at the Quai des Theatins, at the Hôtel Labriffe which is frequented by the nymphs of the Emigration party, as well as I know what passes in the Maison de Thilles, near Gonesse, which belongs to Valmerange, the late superintendent of the Harbours, to which Maury and Cazalès used to go round formerly, where Sieyès and Vergniaud have since been visitors, and where some one else goes once a week." As he said this Marat looked significantly at Danton.

Danton cried out, "If my power was worth two liards I would do something terrible."

Marat continued, "I know what you say, Robespierre, as I knew what went on in the prison of the Temple, fattening up Louis XVI., fattening him so well, that in the month of September only, the wolf, the she-wolf, and the wolf-cub ate up eighty-six baskets of peaches; and during the whole of that time the people were perishing. I knew that, as I know that Roland was hidden in a room looking on to the backyard in the Rue de la Harpe. I know that six hundred of the pikes of the 14th of July were manufactured by Faire, the locksmith of the Duke of Orleans; and I also know what was done at the house of Saint Hilaire, on ball nights,—that Saint Hilaire that was the mistress of Sillery. It was that old Sillery who used to rub chalk into the floors of the dancing-rooms, especially the yellow room in the Rue Neuve des Maturins. Buzot and Kersaint have dined in that house. Saladin has dined there with the 27; and with whom, Robespierre? With your friend Lasource!"

"Mere verbiage," muttered Robespierre. "Lasource was no friend of mine." Then he added, "Whilst we are talking there are in London eighteen factories of false assignats."

Marat continued to speak calmly, but with a slight tremor in his voice, which had an alarming effect.

"You belong to the faction of 'Every one for himself.'"

"Yes, I know everything in spite of what Saint Just terms '*the silence of matters of state.*'" As he uttered these words Marat emphasised them, and never took his eyes off Robespierre. "I know what they said at your dining-table, on the days when Lebas invited David to come and eat the dinner cooked by his future wife Elizabeth Duply, your future sister-in-law, Robespierre. I am the all-seeing eye of the people, and from the depths of my cellar I look on. Yes, I see, I hear, and I know. Little things please you. You form a society for mutual admiration. Robespierre lays himself out to be admired by his Madame de Chalabre, who is the daughter of that Marquis of Chalabre who played cards with Louis XV. the night after the execution of Damiens. Yes, some people carry their heads high. Saint Just lives for the tie of his cravat alone. Legendre is all for fashionable dress; he hopes that his new coat and white waistcoat will make people forget that he ever wore an apron. Robespierre believes that historians will take the trouble to record that he wore an olive-green great-coat, and a sky-blue dress-coat. He has his portrait taken in these hung in every room in his house."

Robespierre interrupted him in a voice more calm and placid even than Marat's own. "And your portrait, Marat, will be found in the sewers."

This style of conversation continued, and the softness of their speech contrasted with the violence of answers and retorts, and formed a sort of ironical dialogue mingled with menaces.

"Robespierre, we called those who were endeavouring to overthrow the throne '*the Don Quixotes of the human race.*'"

"And you, Marat, after the 4th of August, in your number 559 of the *Ami du Peuple*,—aha! you see that I have kept the number, which may prove useful,—you asked that titles of nobility should be restored. You said: '*A duke is always a duke.*'"

"Robespierre, at the sitting of the 7th of December, you defended the woman Roland against Viard."

"The same as my brother defended you, Marat, when you were attacked at the Jacobins. What does that prove? A mere nothing."

"Robespierre, it is known what you said to Garat in the little room at Tuileries: '*I am weary of the Revolution.*'"

"Marat, here, in this tavern, on the 29th of October you embraced Barbaroux."

"Robespierre, you said to Buzot, '*The Republic, what sort of a thing is that?*'"

"Marat, it was here that you invited three men from Marseilles to breakfast with you."

"Robespierre, you have yourself guarded by a stout fellow from the market, armed with a club."

"And you, Marat, on the evening of the 10th of August you asked Buzot to help you to fly to Marseilles, disguised as a groom."

"During the trials of September you hid yourself, Robespierre."

"And you showed yourself, Marat."

"Robespierre, you cast on the ground the Cap of Liberty."

"Yes, when a traitor wears it. That which adorns Dumouriez defiles Robespierre."

"Robespierre, you refused, during the passage of the soldiers of Châteauvieux, to cast a veil over the head of Louis XVI."

"I did better than cover his head,—I had it cut off."

Danton interposed, but it was like pouring oil on flames.

"Robespierre, Marat," cried he, "calm yourselves!"

Marat did not care to take the second place, and he turned sharply on Danton. "Why are you interfering, Danton?" asked he.

Danton started to his feet. "Why am I interfering?" cried he. "Because there must be no fratricidal strife, no struggle between two men who both serve the people. We have foreign war and civil war; do not let us have domestic war. I am the founder of the Revolution, and I do not wish any one to destroy it. That is why I interfere."

Without raising his voice Marat replied, "It would be wise to busy yourself in preparing your accounts."

"My accounts!" vociferated Danton;

"go and seek them in the ravines of Argonne; in Champagne, wrested from the enemy; in conquered Belgium; amongst the armies, where four times already I have exposed my breast to the hailstorm of bullets. Go and seek them in the Place de la Revolution, on the scaffold of the 24th of January, when a throne was hurled to the ground; ask them of the guillotine, that widow——"

Marat interrupted him.

"The guillotine is a maiden," said he, "and gives birth to no children."

"Do you think so?" retorted Danton. "I will make her fruitful; *I*, I tell you."

"We shall see," answered Marat. And he gave a bitter smile.

Danton caught that smile. "Marat!" cried he, "you are a man who leads a secret life; I am one that lives in the open, in the fierce light of the sun. I hate the life of a reptile. The existence of the woodlouse would not suit me. You live in a cellar, I in the street. You are intimate with no one, I, on the contrary, am accessible to every soul."

"Nice boy," growled Marat; "will you venture to mount to the height in which *I* live? Then, ceasing his ironical tone, he became peremptory. "Danton," said he, "give me an account of those thirty-three thousand crowns in cash which Montmorin paid you in the name of the King under the pretext of indemnifying you for the loss of your position as solicitor to the Châtelet."

"I was the man of the 14th of July," answered Danton haughtily.

"And the King's wardrobe, and the crown diamonds?"

"Remember the 6th of October."

"And the robberies of your intimate friend Lacroix, in Belgium?"

"Think of the 20th of July."

"And the loans made to Montausier?"

"I urged the people on at the time of the return from Varennes."

"And the Opera house that was built with the money furnished by you?"

"I armed the sections of Paris."

"And the hundred thousand livres of secret service money belonging to the Minister of Justice."

"I caused the 10th of August."

"And the two million of secret expenses of the Assembly of which you appropriated a quarter?"

"I stopped the march of the enemy, and arrested the progress of the allied monarchs."

"Prostitute!" cried Marat.

Danton drew himself up to his full height, and in a terrible voice replied, "Yes, I am what you say; I sold myself, but I saved the world."

Robespierre during this conversation had sat biting his nails. It was not in his nature either to laugh or smile; the laughter and fire of Danton were as unnatural to him as the sneer and venom of Marat.

Danton continued, "I am like the ocean; I have my ebb and flow; at low water you can see my sands, at high water my waves."

"Your froth," said Marat.

"My storm," said Danton.

Danton and Marat were now both on their feet. The latter had at length blazed into passion; the viper had become a dragon.

"Ah!" cried he; "ah, Robespierre, ah, Danton, you will not listen to me! Well, then, I tell you that you are lost. Your policy has come to a point beyond which it can go no further. You have no means of escape left to you. And you are doing things which close every door to you, save that of the tomb."

"That is our grandeur," said Danton, shrugging his shoulders.

Marat went on,—"Take care, Danton; Vergniaud had a large mouth, thick lips, and bushy eyebrows, Vergniaud was also pitted with the small-pox like you and Mirabeau, but that did not save him from the 31st of May. Ah, you shrug your shoulders! Sometimes that movement shakes off the head. I tell you, Danton, that your loud voice, your loose cravat, your turn-over boots, your luxurious little suppers, your great pockets, are all things to which Louisette will have something to say." Louisette was Marat's fond expression for the guillotine. He continued, "And as for you, Robespierre, you are a Moderate, but it will be of no service to you. Go on, brush your clothes, powder yourself, brush your hair, wear clean linen, be curled, frizzed, and adorned, but I tell

you for all that you will end in the Place de Grève. Read the manifesto of Brunswick. You will be treated like the regicide Damiens, and, fine as you are, you will be torn in pieces by horses."

"Echo of words from Coblentz," muttered Robespierre between his teeth.

"Robespierre, I am the echo of nothing, but I am the voice of every one. You are young, both of you. What is your age, Danton? Thirty-four. And yours, Robespierre? Thirty-three. Well, I have been living for ages. I am the embodiment of human suffering. I am six thousand years old!"

"That is true," answered Danton; "for six thousand years Cain has been embalmed in hatred like a toad in a rock; the rock splits, and Cain appears amongst men in the shape of Marat!"

"Danton!" cried Marat with a lurid light shining in his eyes.

"Well, what is it?" asked Danton.

And so the quarrel went on between these formidable men. A battle of thunderclouds.

CHAPTER III.

AN UPHEAVING OF THE DEPTHS.

THERE was a moment's pause. These giants for a time buried themselves in thought.

Lions fear serpents. Robespierre had grown very pale and Danton very red. Both trembled. The fierce glare in Marat's eyes died away; calm, utter calm, again reigned in the face of that man redoubtable amongst the redoubtable.

Danton felt that he was beaten, but, unwilling to confess, he continued,—

"Marat talks loudly of a dictatorship, an unity, but he has only one power, and that is, to break up all."

Robespierre opened his thin lips, and said, "I am of the opinion of Anacharsis Clootz, and I say, Neither Roland nor Marat."

"And I," answered Marat, "reply, Neither Danton nor Robespierre!" Then, looking them both firmly in the face, he added, "Let me give you a piece of advice, Danton; you are in love, and think of getting married again. Be wise, and leave politics alone!" And, drawing back a step towards the door, he made them a threatening bow. A shudder ran through the frames of both Robespierre and Danton.

"Adieu, gentlemen," said Marat.

At this instant a voice from the bottom of the room said calmly, "You are acting wrongly, Marat."

All turned round. During the explosion of Marat's wrath some one had entered the room unperceived by another door.

"Ah, you are here, Citizen Cimourdain!" said Marat. "Good-day."

For it was Cimourdain who had entered the room.

"I say that you are wrong, Marat," said he.

Marat's face grew green; it was his manner of turning pale.

Cimourdain added, "You are useful, but Danton and Robespierre are necessary Why then threaten them? Union, union, citizens! The people desire that you should be united."

The entrance of this man had the calming effects of a rush of cold water; like the advent of a stranger in the midst of a domestic quarrel it calmed the surface, even if the depths were still disturbed

Cimourdain advanced towards the table. Danton and Robespierre knew him; they had often remarked in the public tribunals of the Convention this powerful though obscure man whom all the people hailed with acclamation. Robespierre, however, always a formalist, asked, "Citizen, how did you come in here?"

"He is a member of the Évêche," answered Marat with a sulky sort of submission in his voice. Marat braved the Convention, influenced the Commune, but dreaded the Évêche. This is a law.

Mirabeau felt Robespierre moving in some unknown depth below him, Robespierre felt Marat, Marat, Hébert, Hébert, Babdœuf. As long as the lower strata remain calm the politician can advance, but under the most revolutionary there must be some subsoil, and the boldest halt in terror when the earthquake that they have themselves created quivers under their feet.

To make a distinction between the movements brought about by covetousness and those arising from principle, to contend against one and to assist the other, is what forms the genius and virtue of great revolutionary characters.

Danton saw that Marat hesitated. "Oh, Citizen Cimourdain is not out of place here," said he, and he extended his hand to him. Then he added, "And now let us explain the whole position to Citizen Cimourdain, for he has stepped in at the right moment. I represent the party of the Mountain, Robespierre the Committee of Public Safety, Marat the Commune, and Cimourdain the Évêche. He has come to decide the matter."

"Be it so," answered Cimourdain in his grave and simple way. "What is the business that you are discussing?"

"It was about La Vendée," answered Robespierre.

"La Vendée!" repeated Cimourdain; and then he continued, "yes, La Vendée is a constant source of danger. If once the Revolution dies it will be because it has received a mortal wound from La Vendée. From that quarter there is more to be feared than from ten Germanies. In order that France may exist La Vendée must be suppressed."

These few words made a friend of Robespierre, but in spite of this he could not refrain from putting the question, "Were you not formerly a priest?"

The air of the Church that still hung about Cimourdain did not escape Robespierre, for in another he could recognise what he had within himself.

Cimourdain answered, "Yes, citizen."

"What does that matter?" exclaimed Danton; "after all, they are worth as much as the others. In times of revolution priests are made into good citizens, as church bells are cast into guns. Danjou is a priest; Danou is a priest; Thomas Lindet is Bishop of Evreux. Why, Robespierre, in the Convention you sit side by side with Massieu, the Bishop of Beauvais! The grand vicar Vaugeois was on the Insurrectionary Committee on the 10th of August. Chabot is a Capuchin monk. It is Brother Gerle who invented the oath of the Tennis Court. It was the Abbé Andran who proposed that the National Assembly should take the precedence of the King. It was the Abbé Goutte who demanded that the Legislature should remove the dais from the chair of Louis XVI. It was the Abbé Grégoire who put forward the abolition of royalty."

"Assisted," sneered Marat, "by the actor Collot d'Herbois; between them they did the job. The priest overthrew the throne, and the buffoon has upset the King."

"Let us get back to La Vendée," said Robespierre.

"Well," answered Cimourdain, "what is it; what is taking place now in La Vendée?"

Robespierre replied, "She has got a chief at last, and is about to become dangerous."

"Who is this chief, Citizen Robespierre?"

"He is the ex-Marquis of Lantenac, who calls himself a Prince of Brittany."

Cimourdain started. "I know him," said he. "I was his chaplain." He paused for a moment, and then added, "He led a gay life before he became a soldier."

"Like Biron, who was a perfect Lauzun," remarked Danton.

"Yes, an ex-man of pleasure," remarked Cimourdain; "he will be a terrible adversary."

"Frightful," answered Robespierre; "he burns villages, slaughters the wounded, massacres the prisoners, and shoots the women."

"The women!"

"Yes, amongst others, he has had the mother of three children shot, and no one knows what has become of the children. But he is a soldier, and knows how to carry on war."

"Yes," answered Cimourdain, "he has served in Hanover, and his soldiers said, Richelieu for show, Lantenac for endurance. It was Lantenac who was the real general. If you want to hear about him, ask your colleague Dussaulx." For a few seconds Robespierre remained plunged in thought, then the conversation between Cimourdain and himself recommenced.

"Well, Citizen Cimourdain, that man is in La Vendée."

"How long since?"

"For the past three weeks."

"He must be outlawed."

"That has been done."

"A price must be put on his head."

"That has been done."

"Any one who will give him up must be promised a large reward."

"That also has been done."

"Not in assignats."

"No."

"In gold."

"It has been offered."

"And when taken he must be executed."

"That will be done."

"By whom."

"By you."

"By me?"

"Yes, you will be sent to La Vendée, by the Committee of Public Safety, with full powers."

"I accept the post!"

Robespierre was rapid in his choice in his capacity as a statesman. He took from a heap of papers before him a sheet of blank paper at the head of which was printed, "FRENCH REPUBLIC, ONE AND INDIVISIBLE, COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY."

Cimourdain continued, "Yes, I accept; Lantenac is a savage man, I will be the same. I will wage with him a war to the death; I will save the Republic, God willing!" He paused an instant, and then added, "I am a priest, and yet I believe in God!"

"God is getting old," observed Danton.

"I believe in God," repeated Cimourdain calmly.

Robespierre, with a sinister look upon his face, gave a nod of approval.

"To whom shall I be attached?"

"To the staff of the commander of the Expeditionary Columns sent against Lantenac!" answered Robespierre. "Only I must warn you that he is of noble birth."

Then Danton broke in. "There, again, is a thing that I laugh at; an aristocrat! Well, and what then? He is as much a nobleman as he is a priest. When nobility takes the right course it is thoroughly to be depended on. Nobility is a mere fancy, but we should not indulge in it more in one sense than another. Robespierre, is not Saint Just of gentle birth, and is not Anarcharsis Clootz a baron? Our friend Charles Hesse, who never misses a single meeting of the Cordeliers, is a prince, and brother of the reigning Landgrave of Hesse Rothenbourg. Montant, Marat's intimate friend, is the Marquis de Montant. There is on the Revolutionary Tribunal a member who is a priest —Vilate—and a member who is a nobleman—Leroy, the Marquis of Montflabert. But both of them are sure men."

"And you forget," said Robespierre, "the Head of the Revolutionary Jury."

"Antonelle?"

"Yes, who is the Marquis Antonelle," returned Robespierre.

"Dampierre was a nobleman," answered Danton, "who was killed before Condé, in the service of the Republic; and Beaurepaire was a noble, who blew out his brains sooner than open the gates of Verdun to the Prussians."

'Yes," answered Marat, "but that does not alter the fact, that on the day when Condorcet said, '*The ancient Greeks were nobles,*' Danton cried out to Condorcet, '*All the nobles are traitors, beginning with Mirabeau and ending with you!*'"

The calm voice of Cimourdain again made itself heard. "Citizens Danton and Robespierre, you are perhaps right in putting a certain amount of confidence in these men, but the people distrust them, and they are not wrong in doing so. When a priest is charged with the duty of watching the actions of a noble the duty becomes a heavy one, and the priest must be inflexible!"

"Certainly," said Robespierre.

"And inexorable," continued Cimourdain.

"You have spoken well, Citizen Cimourdain," said Robespierre. "You will have to look after a young man, and you will have a certain influence over him because you are double his age. You must direct him, but at the same time humour him. It seems that he is possessed of military talent; all the reports of him agree on that point. He was with one of the divisions on the Rhine, and was detached for duty in La Vendée. From his arrival on the frontier he has been remarkable for bravery and sagacity. He has led the Expeditionary Column with the greatest judgment.

For the last fifteen days he has kept the old Marquis de Lantenac at bay, has repulsed him and driven him before him. He will finish by forcing him back to the sea, and utterly defeating him. Lantenac has all the skill of an experienced general, and he the audacity of a young commander. The young man has already made enemies through jealousy. The Adjutant-General, L'Echelle, is jealous of him!"

"L'Echelle wants a supreme command, and all that is in favour is a joke,—it needs L'Echelle (a ladder) to get over Charette (a cart)—but whilst he is doing this Charette is beating him."

"And he does not like the idea that any one but himself should defeat Lantenac," continued Robespierre. "The whole trouble in the war in La Vendée arises from these jealousies. Our soldiers are heroes badly commanded. A mere captain of Hussars, Cherin, entered Saunier with a trumpet sounding the *Ça ira*, and took Saunier. He could have gone on and taken Cholet, but he had no orders, and so halted. The whole of the commands in La Vendée must be reorganised. They have scattered the Corps de Garde, and broken up the divisions; an army in small detachments is an army paralysed, it is a rock being ground into powder. At the camps at Paramé there are no tents. Between Treguir and Dinan there are a hundred petty detachments, which could easily be formed into a division, which would cover the whole sea line. L'Echelle, under the advice of Pavain, denudes the northern portion of the country of troops to strengthen the southern, and thus leaves France open to an English invasion. With an army of half a million of peasants to support him, Lantenac is desirous of organising a descent of England upon France. The young commander of the expeditionary column puts the point of his sword against Lantenac's loins, presses him backwards, and defeats him without L'Echelle's permission, and L'Echelle is his superior. Therefore L'Echelle denounces him. Opinions are equally divided regarding this young man. L'Echelle wishes him to be shot, and Prieur of the Marne wants him to be made Adjutant-General."

"The young man," remarked Cimourdain, "seems to be possessed of high qualities."

"But he has one great defect," interrupted Marat.

"What is that?" asked Cimourdain.

"Mercy," answered Marat; and added, "he is bold in action, but indulgent afterwards; he pardons, gives quarter, protects monks and nuns, saves women and the daughters of nobles, gives liberty to prisoners, and lets priests go free."

"A serious fault," murmured Cimourdain.

"A crime!" said Marat.

"Sometimes," said Danton.

"Often!" said Robespierre.

"Almost always!" continued Marat.

"When one has to deal with enemies of one's country it is always so," said Cimourdain.

Marat turned towards him.

"And pray what would you do to a commander of Republican troops who would set a Royalist leader at liberty?"

"I should follow L'Echelle's idea, and have him shot."

"Or guillotined," suggested Marat.

"One or the other," said Cimourdain.

Danton began to laugh.

"I should like one as well as the other," said he.

"You are sure of one of them," growled Marat.

Then, turning his eyes from Danton, he addressed Cimourdain.

"Therefore, Citizen Cimourdain, if a Republican chief faltered for a moment, you would have his head cut off?"

"Within twenty-four hours."

"Very well," returned Marat. "I agree with Robespierre. Citizen Cimourdain must be sent as citizen delegate of the Committee of Public Safety to La Vendée, and attached to the staff of the commander of the Expeditionary Column. By the way, what is his name?"

"He is an ex-noble," answered Robespierre, and he began to turn over the papers before him.

"Let us give a priest the charge of a nobleman," said Danton. "Alone, I should distrust them both, but together I am not afraid of them; one will look after the other wherever they go."

Cimourdain's eyes flashed with anger for a moment, but no doubt he found that the remark was reasonable enough, for without turning to Danton he said in his severe voice,

"If the Republican commandant who is entrusted to me commits a fault he shall suffer death."

"Here is his name, Citizen Cimourdain," said Robespierre, who had been looking over his papers. "You will have full authority over the ex-viscount; he is called Gauvain."

Cimourdain grew ghastly pale.

"Gauvain!" repeated he.

Marat noticed Cimourdain's pallor.

"The Viscount de Gauvain!" said Cimourdain once more.

"Yes," answered Robespierre.

"Well," said Marat, with his eyes firmly fixed on Cimourdain, "upon the conditions made by yourself, do you accept the post of delegate to the command of this Gauvain? Is it settled?"

"It is settled," answered Cimourdain firmly, but his face was paler than ever.

Robespierre took up the pen that was lying near him, and wrote in his methodical and correct hand four lines on the sheet of paper bearing the heading, COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY, signed it, and passed the paper and pen to Danton. He signed, and handed it to Marat, who, never removing his eyes from the livid features of Danton, signed immediately below his signature.

Robespierre then dated the order and gave it to Cimourdain, who read:—

"AN. II. OF THE REPUBLIC.

"*Full powers are given to Citizen Cimourdain, Commissioner delegated by the Committee of Public Safety, to be attached to the Expeditionary Columns commanded by Citizen Gauvain of the Army of the Coast.*

"ROBESPIERRE.—DANTON.—MARAT.

"*June 28th*, 1793."

The Revolutionary Calendar, called also the Civil Calendar, had not been legally instituted at that period, and was only adopted by the Convention on the proposition of Romme on the 5th of October, 1793. Whilst Cimourdain read this document Marat watched him narrowly, and in a half whisper, as though talking to himself, "This must be legalised by a decree of the Convention, or by a special order of the Committee of Public Safety, so that something still remains to be done."

"Citizen Cimourdain," said Robespierre, "where do you live?"

"Cour de Commerce."

"Do you?" cried Danton, "so do I; we are neighbours, then."

Robespierre continued, "There is not a moment to be lost. To-morrow you will receive your commission in due form, signed by all the members of the Committee of Public Safety. This is only a temporary confirmation of your commission, which accredits you specially to the other delegates, Philippeaux, Prieur of Marne, Lecointre, Alquier, and the others. We know you well, and your powers are without restriction of any kind. You can make Gauvain a general or send him to the scaffold. To-morrow at three o'clock you will have your signed commission. When can you leave?"

"At four o'clock," answered Cimourdain.

Then they separated. On his return home, Marat warned Simonne Evrard that he would attend the Convention the next day.

BOOK III.

THE CONVENTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE CONVENTION.

And now we arrive at the apex of all—the Convention. The gaze grows steady as we reach this height. Never had a grander spectacle appeared on man's horizon.

There were the Himalayas, and there was the Convention.

During its existence, for it had an existence, people scarcely understood what it was. It was its actual grandeur that escaped the eyes of its contemporaries; they were too much terrified to be dazzled by it. There is a certain horror in everything that is grand. It is easy to admire mediocrities and hills; but anything that is too lofty, whether it be genius or a mountain, an assembly as well as a masterpiece, terrifies when you approach it too closely. You lose your breath in an ascent, you slip in a descent, and rugged points, which are beautiful to the eye, wound the feet of the traveller. Foaming torrents reveal precipices, and clouds veil the mountain tops. To gain a summit too suddenly, terrifies as much as a fall from it. There are, therefore, more reasons for terror than for admiration. One is filled with a strange feeling, a dislike of the grand and beautiful. One can see the depths, and as we gaze down we lose sight of their sublimity. One sees the monster, but cannot perceive the miracle. It was thus that the Convention was first judged. It was gazed at by short-sighted persons when it should have been inspected by the eye of an eagle.

To-day we can see it in perspective, and it throws across the calm and far-away sky, against a background at once tragic and serene, the gigantic profile of the French Revolution.

CHAPTER II.

THE HALL OF ASSEMBLY.

The 14th of July had delivered.

The 10th of August had struck with a thunderbolt.

The 21st of September had established.

The 21st of September was the Equinox—the Equilibrium, Libra—the scales. It was following a remark of Romme, that beneath this sign of Justice and Equality the Republic was proclaimed.

A constellation heralded it.

The Convention was the first Avatar of the people. It was by means of the Convention that the first page of the grand new book was opened, and the future of the present commenced.

Every idea must have a visible surrounding, and each principle requires some kind of a habitation. A church is God enclosed between four walls. Every principle requires a temple of its own. When the Convention burst into existence, the first problem to be solved was how to lodge it.

First the Riding School, and lastly the Tuileries were taken. A dais was erected, and decoration arranged—great grey paintings by David imitating bas-reliefs. Benches were arranged in proper order. There was a square tribune, parallel pillars with pedestals like blocks of wood, and tall right-angled stems; square cells, into which the spectators were packed, and which were known as the public tribunes; an awning after the Roman fashion; Grecian curtains; and in the midst of these right angles and straight lines the Convention installed itself. It was a tempest bounded by geometrical figures. Upon the tribune the red Cap of Liberty was painted in a grey colour. The Royalists began by laughing at this grey red cap, this rather temporary hall, this monument of pasteboard, this sanctuary of *papier-mâché*. How soon would this pantheon of mud and spittle all disappear! The columns were staves from barrels, the arches of thin planks,

the bas-reliefs of mastic, the portion supported by the columns of new pine, the statues of plaster, the marbles were paint, and the walls canvas; and yet of this temporary building France has made a dwelling that will live to all eternity.

When the Convention used to first hold its sittings in the Riding-School the walls were covered with placards, with which Paris was filled at the time of the return from Varennes. On one you read, "*The King is returning; he who applauds him shall be beaten; he who insults him shall be hung.*" On another, "*Silence, then, and keep your hats on your heads; he is going to pass before his judges.*" Upon another, "*The King has been aiming at the nation, he has been a long time at it, and it is now their turn to fire.*" Upon another, "*The Law, the Law.*" It was within these walls that the Convention tried Louis XVI.

When the Convention held its sittings in the Tuileries, on the 10th of May, 1793, and which was named the National Palace, the hall of meeting occupied the whole space between the Pavillon de l'Horloge (called the Pavilion of Unity) and the Pavillon Marsau (then named the Pavilion of Liberty). The Pavilion of Flora was renamed Pavilion Egalité. The great staircase, planned by Jean Bullart, led to the hall. All the ground floor of the palace beneath the Hall of Assembly was a kind of long guardroom, filled with the arms and the beds of the troops who kept watch over the Convention. This Assembly had its guard of honour, styled "The Grenadiers of the Convention."

A tricoloured ribbon separated the place where the Convention sat from the garden in which the populace came and went.

CHAPTER III.

HOW IT WAS ARRANGED.

LET us conclude this description of the Hall of Assembly. Everything that has reference to this terrible spot is of interest. The great statue of Liberty, placed between the wide windows, was the first object that caught the eye on entrance. The dimensions of the room are as follows: —one hundred and forty feet in length, thirty-four feet in width, thirty-seven feet in height. It had formerly been the King's theatre, now it was the theatre of the Revolution. This splendid and beautiful hall, built by Vigarani for the use of the Court, was half-concealed by the rough carpentry that in '93 bore up the weight of the people. The wood-work on which the public tribunals were erected had, and this is deserving of notice, a single post for its only support; this post was ten metres* in circumference, and was made of one piece. Few Caryatides have performed such a duty as that beam, for for years it bore up the heavy pressure of the Revolution. It supported applause, enthusiasm, insolence, noise, tumult, and riot, —all the vast chaos of conflicting passions, —and yet it did not give way. After the Convention it was a spectator of the Council of the Ancients. The 18th Brumaire saw the last of its duties. It was then that Percier replaced it by marble pillars, which, however, did not prove so durable.

The idiosyncracies of the architectural world are sometimes very strange. The designer of the Rue de Rivoli had for his ideal the trajectory of a cannon ball, the architect of Carlsruhe a fan. An enormous drum seemed to have given the idea for the hall in which the Convention began to sit on the 10th of May, 1793. It was long, high, and flat. On one of the sides of the parallelogram was a grand semicircle; this amphitheatre held the seats of the representatives, which had neither tables nor desks. Garan Coulon, who took many notes, always held his paper on his knees. In front of the seats was the tribune; in front of that the bust of Lepelletier-Saint-Farjeau; behind was the President's seat.

The head of the bust projected a little beyond the ledge of the tribune, and for that reason it was eventually removed from the place.

The amphitheatre was composed of nineteen semicircular rows of benches rising one behind the other, the supports of the seats prolonging the amphitheatre into two curved points. Below, in the semicircle at the foot of the tribune, the ushers and other officers had their seats.

* 32 feet 6 inches.

On one side of the tribune a placard, nine feet in height, in a black frame, was fastened to the wall, containing in two pages, separated by a species of sceptre, "*A Declaration of the Rights of Man.*" On the opposite side was a similar frame occupied at a later date by the "*Constitution of the Year II.*" the pages divided by a sword.

Above the tribune, over the head of the speaker, from a deep box, with double compartments, which was always filled with spectators, floated three enormous tricoloured flags, almost horizontally placed, resting on an altar upon which could be read the word "LAW." Behind the altar were enormous Roman Fasces, like the guardian of free speech. Colossal statues stood erect against the walls, and faced the representatives. Lycurgus was on the right hand of the President and Solon on his left, whilst Plato was over the heads of the party of the Mountain. These statues were supported on plain blocks of wood, and rested on a long projecting cornice which ran round the hall, and separated the people from the Assembly. Spectators could lean their elbows on this cornice.

The bottom of the black wooden frame of the Rights of Man reached to the cornice, and broke the regularity of the entablature, an infraction of a straight line which made Charbot complain. "It is ugly," said he to Vadier.

The heads of the statues were alternately encircled with crowns of oak and laurel leaves. A tapestry of green, upon which similar crowns were painted in green of a deeper hue, covered the whole of the walls of the Hall from the cornice. Above this drapery the wall was white and bare. In it, as if hollowed out by a gigantic axe, without mouldings or ornaments of any kind, were two rows of public tribunes, one above the other. There were ten tribunes on each side of the hall, and two large boxes at either end, which were always thronged by the people.

The spectators in the lower tribunes overflowing their borders grouped themselves along the railings of the cornice. A long iron bar, firmly fixed at a height upon which a man could lean, guarded the spectators against pressure on the stairs. In spite of this, however, a man was once precipitated headlong into the Assembly. His fall was broken by Massieu, the Bishop of Beauvais, which saved his life.

"There is some use in bishops, after all," remarked the man. The Hall of the Convention could hold two thousand people easily, but sometimes three thousand were crowded in it.

The Convention sat twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. The back of the president's chair was carved, and ornamented with brass nails. The table was supported by four winged monsters standing on one foot, who seemed as if they had come out of the Book of Revelations to aid the Revolution. They appeared as though they had been unharnessed from the chariot of Ezekiel to drag the tumbrel of Sanson. On the table of the President was a huge bell almost large enough to have been used in a church, an immense copper inkstand, and a parchment-covered book full of official reports. Many a time freshly-severed heads, borne aloft upon the points of pikes, had shed drops of blood upon this table. The tribune was reached by an ascent of nine steps, high, steep, and difficult to mount. One day in ascending them Gensonné stumbled. "Why, it is like the ladder that leads to the scaffold," cried he.

"Serve your apprenticeship," retorted Carrier.

In the angles of the wall, where it looked too bare, the architect had put Roman Fasces, with the edge of the axe turned to the people. At the right and left of the tribune were square pedestals, supporting candelabra twelve feet in height, having each four pairs of lamps. In each public box was a similar candelabrum. On the pedestals were carved round ornaments, which the people had named *guillotine collars*.

The benches of the Assembly reached almost to the cornice of the tribunes, so that the people and their representatives could converse together. The exits from the Convention led into a maze of gloomy corridors, from which a fearful din often proceeded.

The Convention filled the palace, and overflowed into the adjoining houses, the Hôtel de Longueville and the Hôtel de Coigny. It was to the Hôtel de Coigny to which, if reliance can be placed on Lord Bradford's letter on the subject, the royal furniture was carried on the 10th of August. It took two months to empty the Tuileries. The committees had their places of assembly in the adjacent pavilions.

The Committee of Public Safety communicated directly with that of Public Security by a dark passage lighted day and night by a reflecting lamp, and was full of spies of all parties. People never spoke there.

The position of the bar of the Convention was frequently altered. Generally it was on the right of the president. At the extreme ends of the hall two upright partitions, which shut off the concentric semicircles of the amphitheatre, left between them and the wall a couple of deep narrow passages, from which two dark square doors opened.

The representatives of the Convention entered directly into the hall by a door which opened on the Terrasse des Feuillants.

The hall was badly lighted during the day by awkwardly arranged windows, but when night came on, the lurid gleam of the dim lamps gave a weird appearance to the whole scene. Their livid clamour made the evening shadows appear yet more dark, and caused the evening sittings to be more melancholy-looking than ever. It was next to impossible to see from one end of the hall to the other; even to the right and left blank faces gazed upon each other. People met in the passages without recognition. As Laignelet one day was hurrying from the tribune, he jostled some person in the sloping passage between the seats. "Excuse me, Robespierre," said he. "Who do you think you are talking to?" answered a rough voice. "Oh, pray pardon me, Marat," said Laignelet.

At the end of the hall, on the right and left hand of the president, were two reserved tribunes; for, strange as it may appear, the Convention had its privileged spectators. These were the only tribunes that were draped. Two gold cords hanging from the centre of the arch supported the curtains. The people's tribunes were quite bare. The whole surroundings were wild and strange, and yet correct in an artistic point of view. Regularity in barbarism is a type of revolution. The hall in which the Convention met presented a perfect example of what artists have since termed "the Messidor order of architecture." It appeared substantial, and yet was fragile in reality. At the period of which we write the builders confounded symmetry with beauty. The last word of the Renaissance had been uttered under Louis XV., and an immediate reaction had set in. The noble had been merged in the mawkish, and purity into prejudice. In architecture there is a strong element of prudery. After the dazzling orgies of form and colour which were in vogue in the eighteenth century, art restricted itself, and only indulged in straight lines. The end of this so-called advance resulted in ugliness. When art is reduced to a skeleton this will be the unfailing result. This is the inevitable result of such progress and abstinence,—art becomes thin from the sobriety of the style adopted.

Setting aside all political feelings, there was something in the appearance of the hall that sent a cold shiver through the nerves of the spectator. The former theatre, with its garlanded boxes, its blue and crimson ceiling, its cut-glass chandeliers, its girandoles with diamond reflections, its luxurious draperies, its abundance of Cupids and Nymphs on the curtain, and the whole amorous idyl which had formerly painted, carved, and gilded this same spot with its smile, came back to the mind as it gazed around and saw on every side hard lines and angles, cold and trenchant as steel: it was Boucher guillotined by David.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY.

But on looking on the members of the Assembly the hall itself was forgotten. When we gaze on the performers we do

not think any longer of the theatre. Nothing could be more confused and yet more sublime. A collection of heroes, a crowd of cowards; wild beasts on a hill, reptiles in a marsh. They struggled, wounded, threatened, and fought each other there, and yet all these combatants are but the phantoms of days gone by, a convocation of giants.

On the right sat the Gironde—a party of thinkers. On the left the Mountain—a group of athletes. On one side was Brissot, who had received the keys of the Bastille; Barbaroux, who was supreme in Marseilles; Kervéléjan, who held Brest under his thumb; Gensonné, who had made the representatives superior in rank to the generals; the fatal Gaudet, to whom the Queen one night in the Temple showed the Dauphin in his sleep; Gaudet kissed the sleeping child, and used all his influence to bring about the execution of his father; Sallez, the mad enthusiast, who denounced the alliance between the Mountain and Austria; Sillery, the cripple of the Right, as Couthon was the paralytic of the Left; Lause Duperret, who, having been called a scoundrel by the editor of a paper, invited him to dinner, with the remark, "By scoundrel, I suppose you mean a man who does not think exactly as you do;" Rabaut Saint Etienne, who commenced his almanack for 1790 with this: "The Revolution is ended;" Quinette, one of those who overthrew Louis XVI.; the Jansenist Camus, who drew up the civil constitutions of the clergy, and believed in the miracles of the Deacon Pâris, and knelt each night before a figure of Christ seven feet high which was nailed to the wall of his room; Fouchet, a priest, who, with Camille Desmoulins, brought about the 14th of July; Isnard, who was foolish enough to say, "Paris shall be burnt;" Jacob Dupont, the first who exclaimed, "I am an Atheist," and to whom Robespierre retorted, "Atheism is an aristocratic vice now;" Lanjuinais, the firm, bold, and sagacious Breton; Dulos, the Euryalus of Bayer-Fonfrède; Rebecqui, the Pylades of Barbaroux, who resigned because Robespierre had not yet been guillotined; Richaud, who struggled against the supremacy of the Sections; Lasource, who gave utterance to the murderous epigram, "*Woe to grateful nations,*" and who on the scaffold contradicted his words by the scathing sarcasm that he flung at the party of the Mountain, "*We die because the people are asleep. You will die when they awake;*" Biroteau, who brought in motion for the claim of inviolability, and was the maker of the axe of the guillotine, and by so doing erected the scaffold upon which he was himself to suffer; Charles Villatte, who sheltered his conscience under this negation, "*I do not wish to vote under the pressure of the hatchet;*" Louvet, the author of Faublas, who was to end his career as the keeper of a library in Palais Royal, with Lodoïska behind his counter; Mercier, author of the Tableau de Paris, who exclaimed, "On January the 31st *all the kings in Europe felt their necks to see if they were still secure;*" Marec, whose sole idea was "the faction of ancient limits;" the journalist Carra, who at the foot of the scaffold remarked to the headsman, "*It is a bore to die, I should have liked to see the end;*" Vigée, who called himself a grenadier in the 2nd Battalion of Mayence and Loire, who, threatened by the occupants of the public tribunes, exclaimed, "*I propose that at the first murmur from the tribunals we all withdraw and march on Versailles, sabre in hand;*" Bazot, who was spared other deaths, to expire by famine; Valazé, fated to die by his own poignard; Condorcet, who was to perish at Bourg la Reine (rechristened Bourg Égalité) betrayed by his pocket Horace; Petion, who was the idol of the populace in 1792, and devoured by wolves in 1794, and twenty others besides; Pontécoulant, Marboz, Lidon, Saint Martin, Dussaulx, the translator of Juvenal, who had served in the Hanoverian campaign; Boileau, Bertrand, Lesterp Beauvais, Lesage, Gomaire, Gardien, Maniville, Duplantier, Lacaze, Antiboul, and at their head a Barnave whom they called Vergniaud.

On the other side were Antoine Louis Léon; Florelle de Saint Just, a pale man with a low forehead, regular features, mysterious eyes, and an appearance of deep sadness; Merlin de Thionville, whom the Germans called Feuer Teufel (Fire Devil); Merlin de Douai, the guilty power of the *Law of Suspected Persons;* Soubrany,

whom the people of Paris at the first Prairial wished to have for their general; the ex-priest Lebon, grasping a sword in the hand which had formerly sprinkled holy water; Billaud Varennes, who foresaw the magistracy of the future, without either arbiters or judges; Fabre d'Eglantine, who had one happy inspiration in the Republican calendar, as Rouget de Lisle had in the *Marseillaise*, but neither of whom went any further; Manuel, the lawyer of the Commune, who said, "*A dead king is not the less a man;*" Goujon, who had been at Tripstadt, Neustadt, and Spires, and had seen the flight of the Prussian army; Lacroix, an attorney turned into a general, made a knight of Saint Louis six days before the 10th of August; Freron Thersites, the brother of Freron Zoïle; Ruth, the inexorable searcher of the iron chest, destined for a great Republican suicide, for he was to kill himself on the day the Republic died; Fouché, with the soul of a demon, and the face of a corpse; Camboulas, the friend of Father Duchesne, who said to Guillotin, "*Thou belongest to the club of Feuillants, but thy daughter belongs to the Jacobin club;*" Jagot, who, when some one complained to him of the nakedness of the prisoners, replied by the cruel saying, "*A prison is a dress of stone;*" Javogues, the sacrilegious desecrator of the tombs of Saint Denis; Osselin, a prescriber who hid one of the prescribed (Madame Charry) in his own house; Bentabole, who, when he occupied the chair, made signs to the tribunes when to applaud and when to hiss; Robert the editor, the husband of Mademoiselle Kéralio, who wrote, "*Neither Robespierre nor Marat come to my house. Robespierre may come when he wishes—Marat never;*" Garan Coulon, who, when Spain interfered on the occasion of the trial of Louis XVI., insolently proposed that the Assembly should not condescend to read a letter from a king on behalf of a king; Grégoire, a bishop, at first worthy of the Primitive Church, but who was afterwards Grégoire the Republican and Count Grégoire under the Empire; Amar, who said, "*The whole earth condemns Louis XVI. To whom then appeal against the judgment? To the stars!*" Rouger, who on the 21st of January objected to the cannon on the Pont Neuf being fired, on the grounds that "*a king's head in falling should make no more noise than that of another man;*" Chenier, the brother of André; Vadier, one of those who laid a pistol on the tribune; Tanis, who said to Momoro, "*I wish Marat and Robespierre to embrace at my table.*" "*Where dost thou live?*" "*At Charenton.*" "*Anywhere else would have surprised me,*" replied Momoro; Legendre, who was the butcher of the French Revolution, as Pride had been of the English. "*Come near that I may knock you down,*" cried he to Lanjuinais. "*First let it be decreed that I am a bullock,*" retorted Lanjuinais; Collot d'Herbois, that lugubrious comedian whose face was an antique mask with two mouths, one for praise and one for blame; one for affirmation and one for negation; branding Carrier at Nantes, and deifying Châlier at Lyons; sending Robespierre to the scaffold, and ordering Marat to be buried in the Pantheon. Gennisieur, who proposed death for any one found with a medal with the inscription, "*Louis XVI. Martyr,*" upon him; Louis Bourdon the school-master, who had offered his house to the old men of Mount Jura; Topsent, the sailor; Goupilleau, the lawyer; Laurent Lecointre, the merchant; Duhem, the physician; Sergent, the sculptor; David, the painter; Joseph Egalité, the prince. There were others, too: Leconite Puiraveau, who proposed a motion that Marat was mad; Robert Lindet, the restless creator of that devil fish whose head was the Committee of General Surety, and which covered France with its one-and-twenty thousand arms, called revolutionary committees; Lebœuf, upon whom Giret Dupré, in his "Christmas of False Patriots," had made this epigram,

"Lebœuf vit Legendre et beugla;"

Thomas Paine, the gentle American;* Anacharis Clootz, German, Baron, Millionaire, and Atheist; the straightforward Lebas, the friend of the Duplays; Roviere, one of those extraordinary characters that are wicked for the mere sake of wicked-

* Mons. Hugo here evidently refers to the notorious Tom Paine, the author of "The Age of Reason." He was an Englishman, born at Thetford in Norfolk.

ness, for art from love of art exists more frequently than people imagine; Charlier, who proposed that the word "*you*" should be used in addressing aristocrats; Tallien, elegiac and cruel, who will bring about the fall of the Convention from love; Cambacères, the lawyer, later on to be a prince; Carrier, an attorney, who will develop into a tiger; Laplanche, who will one day cry, "*I demand prior right of speech for the alarm given;*" Thuriot, who demanded that the votes of the Assembly should be given aloud; Bourdon de l'Oise, who challenged Chambon to a duel, denounced Paine, and was himself denounced by Hébert; Fayau, who proposed the dispatch of an army of incendiaries into La Vendée; Travaux, who on the 13th of April was almost a mediator between the Mountain and the Gironde; Vernier, who proposed that the leaders of the Mountain and the Gironde should be sent to serve as private soldiers; Rewbell, who shut himself up in Mayence; Bourbotte, who had his horse killed under him at the taking of Saumur; Guimberteau, who divided the movements of the army on the coast near Cherbourg; Jard-Panvilliers, who did the same near Rochelle; Le Carpentier, who led the squadron of Cancale; Roberjot, for whom the ambush at Rastadt was laid; Prieur of the Marne, who bore in the army his old rank of major; Levasseur de la Sarthe, who by a word decided Serrent, commandant of the battalion of Saint Amand, to commit suicide; Reverchon; Maur; Bernard de Saintes; Charlis Richard Lequinio, and at the head of all Danton. Outside both these camps, and keeping them in subjection, stood the man Robespierre.

CHAPTER V.

HOW THEY TALKED.

Below crouched Dismay, which may be noble, and Terror, which is always contemptible. Beneath passion, beneath devotion, beneath rage, were the dark mysterious armies of the Anonymous. The shoals of the Assembly were the Party of the Plain; it was composed of the men who doubt, who hesitate, who recoil, who put off, who wait, who are always in fear of something or somebody. The Mountain was composed of a select body, the Plain was a mere crowd. The Plain was condensed into one man—Siéyès.

Siéyès was a deep-thinking man, who had grown rather chimerical in his ideas. He had halted at the third estate, and had been unable to ascend to the people. Certain minds are so constituted that they rest halfway. Siéyès called Robespierre a tiger, and was spoken of by him as a mole. This metaphysician had run aground, not in wisdom, but in prudence. He was the courtier, not the servant of the Republic. He grasped a spade, and worked with the people in the Champ de Mars, harnessed to the same cart as Alexander Beauharnais. He advised energy, but he never displayed any. He said to the Girondists, "*Put the cannon on your side.*" There are thinkers who are combatants, too, such as Condorcet with Vergniaud, or Camille Desmoulins with Danton; and there are thinkers who only wish to preserve their lives; Siéyès belonged to this class. Vats that work the best have a sediment at the bottom. There was a lower depth of party than the Plain, and this was the Marsh, a hideous mass of stagnation which exposed to view all the transparencies of egotism. There were the tremblers in anxious expectation. Nothing could be more abject than these men. A conglomeration of shame feeling shame, hidden rages, rebellion under oppression. They were cynically afraid. They had all the courage of cowardice. They preferred the Gironde, but cast in their lot with the Mountain; the final catastrophe depended upon them. They gave weight to the winning side. They gave up Louis XVI. to Vergniaud, Vergniaud to Danton, Danton to Robespierre, Robespierre to Tallien. They pilloried Marat when alive, and deified him when dead. They supported everything until the day when they combined to overthrow it. They had just enough instinct to give the finishing touch when they saw the fabric totter. In their eyes, as they had undertaken to serve on the understanding that the base was solid, if it trembled, it was betraying them. They were the majority; they represented

force, they represented fear. From thence came the audacity that led them on to commit deeds of shamelessness.

Then came May the 31st, the 11th Germinal, the 9th Thermidor, when the tragedies knotted by the hands of giants were severed by the fingers of dwarfs.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT EACH MAN DREAMT.

Amongst men full of passions were mingled men full of dreams. Utopia was there under all its varied forms; under its warlike form, which permitted the use of the scaffold, and under its innocent form, which proposed to abolish capital punishment;—a demon as it glared on the throne, an angel as it cast its eye upon the people. Side by side with those spirits that waged war were those spirits that conceived. The heads of these were filled with war, the brain of the others with peace. One intellect, Carnot's, had brought forth fourteen armies; another, Jean Debry's, was conceiving a universal democratic federation.

Amidst all this impassioned eloquence, amidst these voices, shrieking and growling, there were some silences that bore fruit. Lakanal uttered no sound, and combined in his thoughts a new scheme for national education. Lanthenas was silent, and created the primary schools. Revellière Lepaux kept still, and pondered on the means of raising philosophy to the dignity of religion. Other men occupied themselves with questions of detail of a lighter and more practical description.

Guyton Morveaux went into the question of the sanitary condition of the hospitals; Maire, the abolition of existing servitudes; Jean Bon Saint André proposed means for abolishing imprisonment for debt, and the detention of the person; Romme considered the proposition of Chappe; Duböe, the arrangement of public documents; Coren Fustier, the creation of a school of anatomy, and the formation of a Museum of Natural History; Guyomaid, the navigation of the rivers, and damming up of the Escaut. Art had its monomaniacs. On the 21st of January, when the head of monarchy was faltering on the Place de la Revolution, Bézard, the representative of the Oise, went to see a picture of Rubens which had been discovered in an attic in the Rue Saint Lazare. Artists, orators, prophets, colossal men like Danton, child-like men after the stamp of Clootz, combatants, and philosophers, all strained to arrive at the same goal—and that was progress. Nothing put them out. The grand feature of the Convention was the way in which it discovered by dint of search how much reality there was in what men called the impossible. At the one extreme point was Robespierre, his eyes fixed steadily on Law, at the other Condorcet, with his upon duty. Condorcet was a man of enlightenment and thought; Robespierre was a man of action; and sometimes, in the reformation of effete societies, action means extermination. There are two tides in revolution, the ebb and the flow; and all seasons float along these waves, seasons of ice and seasons of flowers. Each zone of these currents produces men adapted to its climates, from those who live in the fierce glare of the sun, to those who make their dwelling in the thunder clouds.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REGICIDES' VOTES.

Visitors would point out to each other the recess in the corner in the left side passage where Robespierre had hissed into Garat's ear, Garat the friend of Clavière, "*Clavière conspires wherever he respires.*" In the same corner, which seemed made for those who quarrel in whispers, Fabre d'Eglantine had quarrelled with Romme, who had reproached him for spoiling his calendar by changing Fervidor into Thermidor. They showed the angle where the seven representatives of the High Garonne sat crowded up together, and as they were first called on to pronounce their verdict on Louis XVI., answered one after the other—Mailhe, "Death;" Delmas, "Death;" Projean, "Death;" Calès, "Death;" Ayral, "Death;" Julien, "Death;" Desaby, "Death."

There is an eternal reverberation which runs through all histories, and which, since the institution of human justice, has ever elicited from the wall of the tribunal the echo of the tomb. People would point out with their fingers those mouths from whence had come the crash of fatal votes. Paganel, who said, "*Death; a king is only made useful by that;*" Milhaud, who said, *If death had not existed, it would have been necessary to have invented it to-day;*" Old Raffron de Trouillet, who said, "*Speedy Death;*" Goupilleau, who cried, "*The scaffold at once, delay aggravates the pain of dying;*" Siéyès, who said with funereal brevity, "*Death;*" Thuriot, who rejected the appeal to the people proposed by Buzot,—"*What! the primary assemblies! What! Forty-four thousand tribunals! An appeal without limit. The head of Louis XVI. would have time to grow white before it fell;*" Augustin Bon Robespierre, who exclaimed, following his brother, "*I know nothing of that humanity which pardons a tyrant and slaughters the people!*" Foussedoire, the substitute for Bernadin Saint Pierre, who had said, "*I dislike shedding human blood, but the blood of a king is not human blood;*" Jean Bon Saint André, who said, "*No people are free who cannot show a dead tyrant;*" Lavicomterier, who pronounced this axiom,—"*As long as a tyrant lives, liberty is stifled—Death;*" Chateauneuf Randon, who uttered this cry, —"*Death to the last Louis;*" Guvardin, "*Let them execute the overthrown barrier,*" (alluding to the throne); Tellier, who said, "*Let a cannon be cast to fire against the enemy of the calibre of Louis XVI.'s head.*" Then there were the more moderate ones; —Gentil, who said, "*I vote for confinement; to make a Charles I. is to create a Cromwell;*" Bancal, who voted for exile, "*I want the first King of the world condemned to a trade in order to earn his own living;*" Albouys, who said, "*Banishment! let this living spectre wander about amongst the thrones.*" Zangiacomi, who said, "*Confinement, let us use Capet as a scarecrow;*" Chaillon, who said, "*Let him live, I do not wish to make a dead man if Rome is to canonize him after death.*"

Whilst these verdicts dropped one after the other from severe and tightly-compressed lips, and became portions of the history of the tribunes, women in low-necked dresses, and gaily bedizened, sat in the Hall of Assembly, counting the votes, and pricking them off with a pin.

Where tragedy has entered, pity and horror remain. To visit the Convention, no matter at what period of its existence, was to witness once more the trial of the last Capet. The legend of the 21st of January seemed to mingle in all its acts. The formidable assembly was full of those fatal blasts which had extinguished the old torch of monarchy which had burned for eighteen hundred years. The decisive trials of all kings, in that trial of one king, was like a point of departure in the great war waged against the Past. Whatever might be the sitting of the Convention which one attended, the shadow of the scaffold of Louis XVI. thrust itself forward. Spectators talked to each other of the resignation of Kersaint; the resignation of Roland; of Duchatel, the member for the two Sêvres, who, being ill, had himself carried to the Chamber, and voted for the King's life; an act which brought a laugh to Marat's lips; and they sought with their eyes the representative whose name History has forgotten, who, wearied with a sitting of thirty-seven hours, fell asleep, and when roused by the usher as his turn to record his vote arrived, murmured, "*Death,*" and fell asleep once more.

When Louis XVI. was condemned to death, Robespierre had still eighteen months to live, Danton fifteen months, Vergniaud nine months, Marat five months and three weeks, Lepelletier Saint Farjeau one day, so quickly and fiercely did the terrible blast of sentence of death issue from men's lips.

CHAPTER VIII.

MORE ABOUT THE CONVENTION.

THE people had a window opening on to the Convention, which was the public tribunes, and when these were insufficient to accommodate them, they opened the door, and the street flowed into the Assembly. These invasions of the populace into the Senate house present one of the most

astonishing phases of history. In general these interruptions were of a friendly character. The market place fraternised with the President's seat. But it was a cordiality to be feared from a populace, that, one day, within three hours, took possession of the cannon of the Invalides, and forty thousand muskets in addition. Every moment troops of people interrupted the business. Deputations presented petitions, addresses, offerings, at the bar. The pike of honour of the Faubourg Saint Antoine was brought in by a crowd of women. Certain Englishmen offered twenty thousand pairs of shoes for the bare feet of our soldiers. One day you could read in the *Moniteur*:—"The Citizen Arnoux, curate of Aubignan, and commandant of the battalion of Drôme, asks leave to march to the frontier, and desires that his living may be kept for him."

Delegates from the Sections arrived, bringing in hand-basins, dishes, chalices, monstrances, heaps of silver, gold, and enamel presented to the nation by a people in rags and tatters, who, as their only reward, asked to be permitted to dance the Carmagnole before the Convention. Chenard, Narbonne, and Vallière came forward to recite verses in favour of the Mountain. The Section of Mont Blanc brought in a bust of Lepelletière, and a woman placed a red Cap of Liberty on the head of the President, who embraced her. The female citizens of the Section of Mail flung flowers to the Deputies. The "pupils of the country" came, headed by a band of music, to thank the Convention "for having prepared the prosperity of the century." The women of the Section of the French guards offered roses. Those of the Section of the Champs Elysées gave a crown of oak leaves. The women of the Temple came to the bar, and bound themselves by an oath, only to *marry true Republicans*. The Section of Molière presented a medal of Franklin, which by special decree was hung on the crown of the Statue of Liberty. The children of the Foundling, decreed to be the children of the Republic, passed before the Convention, dressed in the national uniform. Young girls of the Section '92 came up, dressed in white robes, and the *Moniteur* of the next day had in it this line:—"*The President received a nosegay from the pure hands of a young beauty.*" The speakers bowed to the crowds, at times, paid them compliments, and said to them,—"*Thou art infallible beyond reproach, and sublime.*" There is an infantile side to the character of the populace, it likes these honeyed words. Sometimes Disorder presented itself before the Assembly; entering with violence, it left in pacification, like the River Rhône, which pours its waters into Lakè Leman; it enters with its waves tinged with mud, and issues from it pure and azure.

Sometimes the crowd was less peaceable, and Henriot was compelled to appear before the gates of the Tuileries with his furnaces ready to heat red-hot shot.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT THE ASSEMBLY DID.

WHILST it disengaged itself from the bonds of revolution, the Assembly progressed in civilisation,—a crucible, but also a forge. In this seething caldron, where terror boiled and bubbled, progress rose to the surface. Out of this chaos of shadow, this tumultuous flight of clouds, spread immense rays of light parallel to the eternal laws. Rays that have lingered on the horizon, for ever conspicuous in the heavens of the human races, and which are "Justice, Tolerance, Goodness, Right, Truth, Love." "*The liberty of each citizen ends when the liberty of another citizen commences*," was an axiom promulgated by the Convention; which in two simple lines combines all human social law. It declared poverty sacred; it deemed that the blind, the deaf, and the dumb should become wards of the State. In the girl-mother, maternity was to be sacred, as by it she was consoled and lifted up. The orphan was a sacred thing, to be adopted by the country; Innocence was sacred in the acquitted prisoner, who was also to be indemnified. It abolished the slave trade; it did away with slavery itself. It proclaimed mutual civic responsibility. It provided for gratuitous public instruction. It organised National education by the method of the Normal School of Paris,

central schools in all the chief towns, primary schools in the parishes. It created the Academies of music, and the Museums. It decreed the perfect unity of the Legal Code, the similarity of weights and measures, and calculation by the decimal system. It established a financial era in France, and the long monarchical bankruptcy was succeeded by public credit. It put the telegraph in working order; to the old it gave almshouses; to sickness sanitarily arranged hospitals; to instructors the Polytechnic School; to science the Scientific Department of the Admiralty; to human intellect the Institute; and all these institutions, though national, were open to citizens of all countries.

Of all the eleven thousand two hundred and ten decrees which were sent out by the Convention, more than one-third had a political bias, one-third had a human aim. It declared that the only firm basis of society was universal morality, and universal conscience the groundwork of the law. And beyond all that, servitude was to be abolished, fraternity proclaimed, humanity protected, human conscience rectified, the law of work transformed into right, and the workman made deserving of help and assistance; national wealth consolidated, infancy raised up and educated, letters and science assisted, light thrown upon all high places; assistance granted to all who suffer. Every new principle to be fairly set forth. All this the Convention carried out with the hydra La Vendée tearing at its entrails, and on its shoulders the crushing opposition of the kings of Europe.

CHAPTER X.

THE AMENITIES OF DISCUSSION.

Enormous space. All types of mankind were then human, inhuman, and superhuman. An epic collection of antagonisms. Guillotin avoiding David, Bagin insulting Chabot, Gaudet sneering at St. Just, Vergniaud showing contempt for Danton, Louvet attacking Robespierre, Buzot denouncing Egalité, Chambon condemning Pache, all uniting in execrating Marat. And still many names still remain to be registered,—Armonville, nicknamed *Bonnet Rouge*, because he always wore a Phrygina cap at the meetings, one of Robespierre's staunchest adherents, and who wished, after the execution of Louis XVI., to guillotine Robespierre to make the balance equal; Massieu, the colleague and follower of the good Lamourette, made a bishop to give his name to a kiss; Lehardy de Morbihan abusing the priests of Brittany; Barère, the man of majorities, who acted as president when Louis XVI. appeared at the bar of the tribunal, and who was to Paméla what Louvet was to Lodoïska; the orator Daunou, who said, "Let us gain time!" Dubois Crancé, to whose ear Marat bent; the Marquis de Chateauneuf; Laclos; Herault de Seychelles, who, recoiling before Henriot, exclaimed, "*Gunners, to your pieces;*" Julien, who compared the Mountain to Thermopylæ; Gamon, who wished to have one public tribune reserved solely for women; Laley, who gave the honours of a sitting to Bishop Gobel, because, when he entered the Convention, he laid aside his mitre, and put on a Cap of Liberty; Lecomte, who cried, "*The priest who unfrocks himself bears off the palm;*" Féraud, whose head Boissy d'Anglas saluted, leaving history this question to solve, "*Did Boissy d'Anglas salute the head, that is, the victim, or the pike, that is, the assassin?*" the brothers Duprat, one a member of the Mountain, and the other a Girondist, who hated each other like the brothers Chenier.

At this tribune were uttered those intoxicating words which seem to lend to those from whom they issue the mysterious title of prophets of the Revolution, and behind which material facts appear to have suddenly assumed an appearance of unlooked-for discontent and violence, as though they had taken offence at something that they had just heard. Catastrophes seem often to be brought about by the words that men utter. Thus the voice on the mountain side will bring down the avalanche, and a word too much produce a social landslip. If no one had spoken, the catastrophe might not have happened. Events occasionally seem to be subject to fits of passion.

It was the mere hazard of a misunderstood word uttered by one of the speakers

that caused the head of Madame Elizabeth to fall. In the Convention, intemperance of language was a privilege. Menaces flew round, and crowded each other like the sparks of a conflagration.

Petion: "Come to the point, Robespierre."

Robespierre: "You are the point, Petion; I will come to it, and you shall see it."

A voice: "Death to Marat!"

Marat: "On the day when Marat dies, Paris will no longer exist; and on the day when Paris dies, the Republic will be over."

Billaud Varennes starts up from his seat, and exclaims, "We wish——"

Barère interrupts him, "Thou speakest like a monarch." Upon another occasion Philipeaux says, "One of the members has drawn his sword on me."

Andoin: "President, call the assassin to order."

The President: "Wait."

Panis: "I call you to order, President."

There was also much insulting laughter.

Lecomte: "The vicar of Chant de Bout complains that his bishop Fauchet forbids his marrying."

A voice: "I cannot see why Fauchet, who has mistresses, should object to others having wives."

Another voice: "Take a wife, priest."

Those in the galleries joined in the debate. They said "thee" and "thou" to the members. The representative Ruamps one day ascended the tribune. One of his hips was much larger than the other. One of the spectators jeered at him, saying, "Turn that to the right, since you have a cheek *à la David.*" Such were some of the liberties that the people took with the Convention. On the 11th of April, 1793, however, when there was a great disturbance, the President ordered one of the most prominent of the interrupters to be arrested. One day when old Buonarotti was present at the sitting, Robespierre spoke for two hours, sometimes looking Danton straight in the face, which was serious, sometimes glancing at him sideways, which was highly dangerous. He ended his speech in a burst of indignation, with these ominous words, "We know the plotters, we know the bribers and the bribed, and we know the traitors, who are present in this very Assembly: they hear us, they see us, and we never take our eyes off them. Let them glance overhead, and they will see the sword of justice suspended above them. Let them look into their hearts, and they will see their own infamy. Let them take care of themselves." When Robespierre had concluded, Danton, with his face turned to the ceiling, his eyes half closed, and one arm hanging loosely by his side, hums contemptuously,

"Cadet Roussel makes speeches in Court,
They are not too long when he cuts them short."

A torrent of abuse followed. "Conspirator," "Assassin," "Scoundrel," "Partisan," "Moderate." They threatened each other before the bust of Brutus,—denunciations, insults, challenges. Furious glances were exchanged. Fists were shaken, pistols permitted to be seen, daggers half drawn from their sheaths. There was the outburst of a volcano in the tribune. Some spoke as though they had their backs against the guillotine. Heads shook, as though terrified at the storm. Men of the Mountain, Girondists, Feuillants, Moderates, Terrorists, Jacobins, Cordeliers, and eighteen regicide priests, all shouted together. These men were like a mass of clouds driven wildly in every direction.

CHAPTER XI.

THE "WHY" AND THE "BECAUSE."

SPIRITS, a prey to the winds.

But the wind was a miraculous one. A member of the Convention was a wave of an ocean. This could be said of even the most influential there. The force of impulsion came from on high. There was a will in the Convention that belonged to all, not to any one member of it. This will was an idea, an immeasurable, an invincible idea, which flitted to the lowest depths from the highest heaven, and whose name was Revolution. When that idea made its way, it crushed down one and raised up another; it bore up one on a crest of foam, and hurled another unto the jagged rocks. This idea knew its des-

tination, and the force of the whirlpool could not withstand it. The Revolution is the work of the Unknown. You may praise or abuse, according as you cling to the past or to the future, but you had better leave it to the power that created it. It appears to be the united work of mighty events and grand individualities, but it is, in fact, the result of events only. Events decree, and men must submit. Events dictate, and men sign. The 14th of July is signed by Camille Desmoulins, the 10th of August is signed by Danton; the 2nd of September is signed by Marat; the 21st of September is signed by Grégoire; the 21st of January by Robespierre: but Desmoulins, Danton, Marat, Grégoire, and Robespierre are but clerks. The great and sinister editor in chief of these pages has a name—God, and His face is covered by a mask called Destiny. Did Robespierre believe in God? Certainly.

Revolution takes the form of a shapeless phenomenon which compresses us on all sides, and is known by the name of necessity. Before this mysterious complication of pleasures, and pains, rises the inexorable *Why* of History.

Because—This reply of the man who is ignorant of all is also the answer of him who knows everything. In the face of those climacteric catastrophes, which devastate, and, at the same time, revivify civilisation, we hesitate to form an opinion on the details. To praise or blame men on account of the result of events, is like praising or blaming figures for the totals that they form. That which is going to happen will happen. The hurricane that is coming will certainly come. The Eternal Serene does not suffer from the winds of the north. High above the storms of the Revolution lie Truth and Justice, as the starry-studded heavens lie above and beyond the reach of the tempests of the earth.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT THE CONVENTION WAS.

SUCH was the boundless Convention. A fortified camp cut off from the rest of the human race. A point of universal attack by the powers of darkness. The nocturnal watchfires of an army of Ideas. A vast bivouac of minds on the edge of an abyss. Nothing in history can be compared to this group. At the same time Senate and People, conclave, and thoroughfare, Areopagus and public square, judgment seat and dock. The Convention always yielded to the mind, but this mind came from the mouth of the people, and was the breath of God.

And at the present moment, after eighty years have flitted away, each time that the Convention passes across the mind of man, be he what he may, either historian or philosopher, that man pauses and meditates, for it is impossible not to be impressed by this mighty passage of shadows.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARAT BEHIND THE SCENES.

As he told Simonne Evrard, Marat, the day after the meeting in the Rue de Paon, went to the Convention. There was a member of the Convention, an ex-marquis who had joined Marat's party, Louis de Montault, who later on made a present to the Convention of a ten-day clock surmounted by a bust of Marat.

As Marat entered, Chabot had just come up to Montault.

"Ex-noble," he began.

Montault raised his eyes. "Why do you address me like that?" asked he.

"Because you are one."

"I?"

"Certainly, since you were a marquis."

"I was never a marquis."

"Pooh, pooh."

"My father was a soldier, my grandfather a weaver."

"What song are you singing now, Montault?"

"My name is not Montault."

"What is your name then?"

"I am called Maribon."

"Well," said Chabot, "it is all the same to me;" and then he muttered between his teeth, "so long as he is not a marquis."

Marat had made a pause in the passage on the left, and was watching Chabot and Montault.

Whenever Marat made his appearance there was a hum of conversation, but not near him; close to him silence reigned. Marat took no notice of this; he scorned the "croaking of the frogs of the marsh."

In the dim light of the lower benches, Coupé de l'Oise, Prunelle, Villars, the bishop who was afterwards a member of the French Academy, Boutroue, Petit, Plaichard, Bonet, Thibaudeau, Valdruche, all pointed him out, and began to speak of him.

"See, there is Marat."

"He is not ill, then?"

"I should think that he was, for he has his dressing-gown on."

"So he has."

"He takes all sorts of liberties."

"Fancy, presuming to come in that dress to the Convention."

"Well, as he came one day with a wreath of laurel on, he may just as well come another in his dressing-gown."

"Face of brass, and teeth of verdigris."

"His dressing-gown looks new."

"What is it made of?"

"Rep."

"Striped?"

"Look at the trimmings."

"They are fur."

"Tiger skin?"

"No, ermine."

"Sham, I suppose."

"And he has stockings on."

"Wonders will never cease."

"And shoes with silver buckles."

"Well, Camboulas with his old wooden shoes will not forgive that in a hurry."

On the other benches they pretended not to see Marat, and talked of other matters. Santhonax came up to Dussaulx.

"Have you heard about it, Dussaulx?"

"Heard about what?"

"The ex-count of Brienne."

"What, who was imprisoned in La Force with the ex-duke of Villeroy?"

"Yes."

"I know both of them; what then?"

"They were guillotined yesterday. In prison they were so alarmed that they bowed to all the red caps of the jailors, and refused to play cards, because they gave them a pack in which there were kings and queens. Yes, they behaved like poltroons in the prison."

"And how did they behave on the scaffold?"

"Like men of courage."

"It is easier to die than to live," remarked Dussaulx epigrammatically.

Barère was reading a report that had reference to La Vendée. Nine hundred men from Morbihan had gone with a gun to the assistance of Nantes. Redon was threatened by the peasants. Paimbœuf was attacked. A squadron was cruising about Maindrin to prevent a descent on the coast. From Supaude to Maure, the whole left bank of the Loire bristled with royalist batteries. Three thousand peasants had taken possession of Pornic. They had shouted, "*Long live the English!*" A letter from Santerre which Barère was reading to the Convention wound up thus:—"Seven thousand peasants have attacked Vannes; we repulsed them, and captured four guns . . ."

"How many prisoners?" interrupted a voice.

Barère continued, "There is a postscrip to the letter. 'We have no prisoners, because now we do not make any.'"

Marat listened without a muscle of his countenance moving; he appeared to be absorbed in deep meditation. He held, crumpled up between his fingers, a scrap of paper upon which, had it been unfolded, these lines in the writing of Momoro might have been read, which were probably in reply to some question put by Marat,—"No opposition can be made to the extreme power of delegated commissioners, more especially those of the Committee of Public Safety. Geunisieur said at the sitting of May 6th, 'Every commissioner is like a king, superior even to one.' But no notice was taken of this. They have the power of life and death. Manade is with Angers, Trullard with Saint Amand, Nyon with General Marcé, Parrien with the army of Sables, Millmi with the army of Niort;—they are all powerful. The club of the Jacobins has even gone the length of appointing Parrein a Brigadier-General. Everything must bend to circumstances. A Delegate of the Committee of Public Safety can hold a Commander-in-chief in check."

Marat ceased crumpling up the paper, and putting it back into his pocket walked

slowly to where Chabot and Montault still continued their conversation, and who had not noticed his entrance.

Chabot was just then saying, "Maribon, or Montault, listen to me; I have just come from the Committee of Public Safety."

"And what are they doing there?"

"They are setting a priest to watch a noble."

"Indeed."

"A noble, like you are——"

"I am not a noble," broke in Montault.

"Who is to be watched by a priest."

"Like you."

"I am not a priest," said Chabot.

Then they both began to laugh.

"Come, tell us a plain story," resumed Montault.

"Here you are then. A priest named Cimourdain is delegated with full power to a viscount named Gauvain. This viscount commands the Expeditionary Column of the army of the coast. The object is to keep the noble from tricking us, and the priest from betraying us."

"That is easy enough," answered Montault; "make the penalty of either one or the other *Death*."

"I came here to do that," said Marat.

The two men looked round.

"Good-day, Marat," said Chabot; "you seldom assist at our sittings."

"My doctor orders me to take baths," replied Marat.

"You should put no faith in baths," answered Chabot; "Seneca died in a bath."

Marat smiled scornfully. "Chabot," said he, "there is no Nero here."

"Yes, there is where you are present," said a rough voice.

It was Danton who spoke on his way to his seat. Marat did not even turn his head.

"Listen," said he, bending towards the two men; "I came here on a serious matter; one of us three must move to-day the proposal of a decree to be passed by the Convention."

"Not I," answered Montault; "they will not listen to me, I am a marquis."

"Nor to me," said Chabot; "I am a capucin monk."

"Nor will they listen to me," replied Marat, "for I am Marat."

There was a silence amongst the three men.

When Marat was buried in thought it was dangerous to put questions to him, but Montault hazarded one. "Marat, what is the decree that you wish to be passed?"

"A decree that punishes with death any officer in command who favours the escape of a rebel prisoner."

Chabot interrupted him, "Such a decree is in existence; it was carried at the end of last April."

"Then it is the same as if it had never existed," said Marat. "All through La Vendée prisoners are permitted to escape, and any one may give them shelter with impunity."

"The act has fallen into abeyance, Marat."

"Chabot, it must be resuscitated, and put in force again."

"Doubtless."

"And the Convention must be addressed on the subject."

"Marat, it is not necessary to apply to the Convention. The Committee of Public Safety can do all that is necessary."

"The end will be attained," said Montault, "if the Committee of Public Safety will placard the decree all over La Vendée, and make one or two sharp examples."

"In high places," remarked Chabot, "amongst the generals."

"Yes, that might answer," muttered Marat.

"Marat," continued Chabot, "go straight to the Committee of Public Safety, and tell them this yourself."

Marat looked fixedly into Chabot's eyes, which made even Chabot feel uncomfortable.

"Chabot," said he, "the Committee of Public Safety sits in Robespierre's house, and I do not go there."

"I will go," said Montault.

"Good," said Marat.

The next day, an order emanating from the Committee of Public Safety was sent to all the towns and villages of La Vendée, ordering it to be made public that the penalty of death would be inflicted upon all those conniving at the escape of brig-

ands and rebel prisoners. This, however, was only a first step, and the Convention was even to go beyond it. Some months later, on the 11th Brumaire, Year II. (November 11th, 1793), when the gates of Laval were thrown open to admit the Vendéan refugees, the Convention decreed, that any city affording an asylum to the rebels should be razed to the ground. On the other hand, the Princes of Europe, in their manifesto issued by the Duke of Brunswick, inspired by the emigrants, and drawn up by the Marquis de Linnon, the intendant of the Duke of Orleans, declared that every Frenchman taken with arms in his hands should be shot, and that if a hair of the King's head were injured that Paris should be levelled with the dust.

Cruelty against Barbarity.

Third Part.

BOOK I.

IN LA VENDÉE.

CHAPTER I.

THE WOODS.

In Brittany, at that time, there were seven terrible forests. The War of La Vendée was the insurrection of the priests. The forest was one of its firmest allies. Two dark powers aiding each other. The seven black forests of Brittany were,—the Forest of Fougères, which bars the road from Dol to Avranches; the forest of Percé, which is eight leagues round; the forest of Paimpont, which is full of ravines and running streams, and is almost inaccessible on the Baignon side, but from the other side of which it was easy to fall back on Concornet, a royalist town; the forest of Rennes, from whence could be heard the bells of the Republican villages, always the most numerous in the neighbourhood of cities,—it was here that Puysage annihilated Focard; the forest of Machecoul, in which Charette, like some wild beast, reigned supreme; the forest of La Garnache, which belonged to the Tremouilles, the Gauvains, and the Rohans; and the forest of Broceliande, which belonged to the fairies.

One gentleman of Brittany had the title, "Lord of the Seven Forests." This was the Viscount de Fontenay, a Breton prince. For the princes of Brittany existed distinct from the princes of France. The Rohans were Breton princes. Garnier de Saintes, in his report to the Convention 15th Nivôse, Year II., thus speaks of the Prince de Talmont: "This Capet of the brigands, sovereign of Maine and Normandy." The history of the Forests of Brittany, from 1792 to 1800, might form a tale of its own, and on to it might be grafted the mighty story of La Vendée like a legend connected with them. History has its truth as well as legendary lore. Legendary truth is of a different nature to historical truth. Legendary truth is invention, having for its result reality. After all, history and legend have both the same end: to depict truth through the man of the period, the man of the universe. La Vendée cannot be perfectly explained except by adding its legends to its real history; the latter is required for its entirety, the former for a detail of events. We may say that La Vendée is worth the trouble, for La Vendée is a miraculous country.

This war of the Ignorant so stupid and so splendid, so abject and yet so magnificent, was the desolation and the pride of France at the same time. La Vendée was a wound of which a nation might be proud.

At certain times, human society has its riddles,—riddles which are solved for the wise in the light, and in the darkness for the ignorant, as well as in violence and brutality. The philosopher hesitates to bring a charge. He remembers the trouble that the solution of these problems causes, and that such cannot pass by without casting beneath them the shadow of a gloomy cloud. If you desire to understand La Vendée, you must picture to

yourself this mighty struggle; on the one side, the French Revolution; on the other, the Breton peasant. In the face of all these unparalleled events, this gigantic menace of all benefits at once, an access of passion for progress, and for an unknown and boundless amelioration, must be placed a wild and singular being—a man with clear eye and long hair, living on milk and chestnuts; recognising every village by the sound of its church bells; never using water except for drinking purposes, covering his body with a leather coat, ornamented with silk arabesques; ignorant, but clad in an embroidered garment, tattooing his garments as his Celtic ancestors had tattooed their faces; treating as a master the man who behaved to him like an executioner; speaking a dead language, which seemed to make his thoughts dwell in a tomb; goading on his bullocks to their work; sharpening his scythe; kneading his buckwheat flour. Respecting, first his plough, and then his grandmother, believing in the Holy Virgin, and in the white Lady; adoring the altar, and also the mysterious stones standing erect and solitary on the heaths; a labourer in the fields, a fisher on the coasts, a poacher in the woods; loving his King, his lord, his priest, and the very vermin that lived upon his body. Often pensive and motionless on the mighty deserted shore, a melancholy auditor of the monotonous rolling in of the waves.

Ask yourself if such a blind man would accept the light.

CHAPTER II.

THE MEN.

THE peasant had two points of support,—the field from which he drew his daily bread, and the wood in which he hid himself.

It is hard to picture to oneself what these Breton forests really were; they were towns; nothing could be more secret, wild, and dumb, than these impassable enlargements of thorns and brushwood. These gigantic thickets were the homes of immobility and silence. There was no solitude outwardly, with so little life in it, no silence more sepulchral, than could be found in its recesses; and yet, if by a sudden and simultaneous operation, light could have been thrown in, and the trees cut away, a crowd of human beings would have been discovered in the depths of the woods.

Circular wells of narrow circumference, their orifices masked by coverings of branches and stones, descending into the earth at first in a vertical direction, and then branching out in a lateral direction, ending in dark chambers, were to be found in these forests. Cambyses found similar ones in Egypt to those which Westermann discovered in the forests of Brittany. In Egypt they were in the desert, here they were in the forest; the caves of Egypt were full of dead men's bones, in Brittany with living and breathing men. One of the wildest spots of the Wood of Misdon was honeycombed by a labyrinth of galleries and cells through which wandered a strange and mysterious population. It was called "The great city." Another glade, as lonely as one passed, was as thickly peopled below, and was known as the "Place Royal." From time immemorial this system of underground life had existed in Brittany. In all ages man had sought secure retreats from man; hence the lurking-places, like the nests of reptiles, dug out beneath the trees. They dated from the time of the Druids, and some of these vaulted chambers were as ancient as the cromlechs of the plains. The creations of legendary lore, and the monsters of history, had all passed through this gloomy land, Teutatès, César, Hoël, Néomènes, Geoffry of England, Alain with the Iron Glove, Pierre Mauclerc, the French House of Blois, the English House of Montfort, kings and dukes, the nine barons of Brittany, the judges of the Great Days, the Counts of Nantes at feud with the Counts of Rennes, lurkers on the high ways, robbers, Free Lances, René II., Viscount de Rohan, the "good Duke of Chaulnes," hanging the peasants under the window of Madame de Sevigné,—the butcheries by the nobles in the fifteenth century, the religious wars in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the thirty thousand human hounds trained to hunt their fellow-man in the eighteenth cen-

tury;—beneath all these merciless tramplings, the inhabitants determined to disappear. Each did so in turn, the Troglodytes to escape the Celts; the Celts the Romans; the Bretons the Normans; the Huguenots the Roman Catholics; and the smugglers from the excise officers,—all these fled to the woods and burrowed underground. It was the last refuge of hunted animals. This is what a people are reduced to by oppression. For two thousand years, despotism, under all its hideous forms of conquest, feudalism, fanaticism, and taxation, held its sway over this unhappy and distracted Brittany,—a sort of pitiless persecution, which only ceased in one form to burst forth in another. Men hid in the bowels of the earth. When the French Revolution burst forth, terror, which is a kind of impotent rage, was already lurking in the human heart, and when the Republic blazed out, the hiding-places in the woods were all in readiness.

Brittany revolted, considering itself persecuted by this enforced enfranchisement. The habitual error of a race of slaves.

CHAPTER III.

MEN AND WOODS IN ALLIANCE.

THE fatal forests of Brittany resumed their old part, and were the slaves and accomplices of this new rebellion as they had been of all preceding ones. The ground of every wood was a species of coral reef, pierced and traversed in every direction by an unknown network of passages, cells, and galleries. In each of these cells five or six men could be sheltered. The difficulty was to breathe. There are still in existence certain calculations which enable us to comprehend the powerful organisation of this vast peasant insurrection. In Ile-et-Vilaine, in the forest of Pertre, the hiding-place of the Prince of Talmont, there was not a breath to be heard, not a trace of man to be discovered, and yet there were six thousand men there with Focard. In Morbihan, in the Forest of Meulac, you could not catch sight of a man, and yet there were eight thousand men. But the woods of Pertre and Meulac were not ranked among the great forests of Brittany. But if an enemy penetrated into them the effect was terrible. Those deceptive thickets were crowded with fighting men hidden in a subterranean labyrinth, which, like an enormous black sponge, burst into civil war as the gigantic foot of the revolution pressed upon it.

There were invisible battalions constantly on the watch. These unknown armies twisted along beneath the feet of the Republican troops, suddenly emerged from the depths of the earth, and sank back into it again; sprang up in invincible force, and vanished again, as though gifted with the power of ubiquity and dispersion, coming on like an avalanche, disappearing like a cloud of dust,—giants, yet having the gift of becoming dwarfs; giants in action, pigmies in their power of concealment. Tigers with the habits of moles. Not only were there the forests, but there were also the woods. Just as there are villages which rank after cities, so after the forests came the woods; the forests are united to each other by a scattered labyrinth of woods. The old castles which were the fortresses, the villages which were the camps, the farms which enclosed spots suitable for ambushes and troops, the fields cut up by ravines and ditches, and fenced by trees, were the meshes of the net which hampered the movements of the republican armies. This complication formed what was known as the *Bocage*.

There was the wood of Misdon, in the centre of which was a lake, the favourite resort of Jean Chouan; the wood of Gennes, which belonged to Taillefer; the wood of Huisserie, where Gouge le Bruant was to be found; the wood of Charny, where Courtillé le Batard, sometimes called Saint Paul, the chief of Vache Noir, lurked; the wood of Burgault, which, by that mysterious Monsieur Jacques, reserved for a strange ending in the subterranean chamber of Juvardeil; there was the wood of Charreau, where Pimoune and Petit Prince, when attacked by the garrison of Chateauneuf, darted forward, and grasping the grenadiers of the Republican ranks round the middle, bore them away as prisoners; the wood of La Herisseux, where the military part of Longue Faye

was routed; the wood of Aulne, from whence the road between Rennes and Lavat could be watched; the wood of La Gravelle, which a prince of the family of La Tremouille had won at bowls; the wood of Lorges in the Colis du Nord, where Charles de Boishardy ruled after Bernard de Villeneuve; the wood of Baynard, near Fontenoy, where Lescure offered battle to Chalbos, who, though only one to five, accepted the challenge; the wood of La Durondais, which in days gone by had been fought for by Alain le Redru and Hérispoux, the son of Charles the Bald; the wood of Croqueloup, upon the edge of the heath upon which Cogne-reau cut off the hair of his prisoners; the wood of Croix Bataille, which heard the Homeric insults exchanged between Jambe d'Argent and Morière; and the wood of La Sandraie, which we have seen being explored by a Parisian regiment, and besides all these there were many others. In many of these woods and forests there were not only subterranean habitations encircling the lair of the chief, but also villages formed of low-roofed huts concealed beneath the trees, which were sometimes so numerous that the whole forest was filled with them. Frequently their presence was betrayed by the smoke; two of these villages of the woods of Misdon have remained celebrated,—Lorrière, near Letang, and in the direction of Saint Ouen les Toits, the collection of cabins called the Rue de Bau. The women lived in the huts, and the men in the holes under the surface. They utilised for this war the Fairy Galleries, and the old Celtic excavations. Food was conveyed to the men buried there in the bowels of the earth. Sometimes they were forgotten and died of hunger; but these were mostly awkward fellows who did not understand how to open the mouths of these wells. As a rule, the covering of moss and branches was so cleverly arranged that, although from the outside it was impossible to distinguish it from the sward, yet it was a most simple thing to open and close it from the inside. These hiding-places were dug with the greatest care. The earth that was removed from the excavation was emptied into some adjacent pool of water. The bottom and sides were lined with fern and moss. They called this shelter "The Lodge." The inhabitants were as comfortable as could be expected, considering that they suffered from a scarcity of light, fire, bread, and air. It was no easy thing to effect a resurrection, and they had to come to the surface again with great care, for they might find themselves between the feet of a moving army. They were dangerous woods, acting like a double trap; the *Blues* dared not enter them, the *Whites* dared not venture out.

CHAPTER IV.

UNDERGROUND EXISTENCE.

THE men grew dreadfully tired of hiding away in burrows like wild animals. During the night, they sometimes braved all risks, and emerged to dance upon the nearest heaths, or else they said their prayers in order to kill time. "*Every day Jean Chouan,*" says Bourdoiseau, "*made us tell our beads.*"

It was next to impossible to prevent the men from going to the Fête de Gerbe, when the proper time arrived, especially those men who came from Bas Maine. Some of them had strange ideas: Denys, called Tranche Montagne, dressed himself as a woman, to be able to go to the theatre at Laval, and then crawled into his burrow again. Sometimes they would suddenly burst forth in search of death, glad to exchange their dungeon for a tomb. Occasionally they would lift the cover of the well and listen for distant firing, following the fortunes of the battle with their ears. As the volleys of the Republicans were regular, so the fire of the Royalists was dropping, and this guided them. If the volley firing ceased suddenly they knew that the Royalists were defeated; if, however, the scattered firing continued, and died away in the distance, it was a sign that they had gained a victory. The *Whites* always pursued a retreating enemy, the *Blues* never, as they had all the country against them. These underground warriors were well informed of what was going on. Nothing could be more rapid than their means of communication, and

yet nothing was conducted with greater secrecy; they had broken all the bridges, and taken the wheels off all their carts, and they found means to communicate with each other and disseminate intelligence. Relays of messengers had been established, from forest to forest, from village to village, from farm to farm, from cottage to cottage, and from thicket to thicket. You would meet a peasant with an expression on his face of the blankest stupidity, but he was a bearer of dispatches which he was perhaps carrying in the hollow of his staff. A former constituent, Boétioux, so that they might pass from one end of Brittany to the other, furnished the peasants with Republican passports of the new form with blanks for the names, of which the traitor had many bundles. It was impossible to detect them. "*Secrets*," says Puysaye, "*entrusted to more than four hundred thousand individuals have been strictly kept.*"

This quadrilateral, closed on the south by the line from Sables to Thouars; on the east by the line from Thouars to Saumur, and by the river Thoué; on the north by the Loire; and on the west by the sea; seemed to be endued with a feverish activity, and not one single point of the soil could be stirred without shaking the whole country. In the twinkling of an eye news passed from Luçon to Noirmoutier, and the camp at La Loué, knew what was going on at the Camp of Croix Morineau. You would have thought that the birds of the air bore the messages. Hoche, writing on the 7th Messidor, Year II., says, "*You would think that they had a telegraph.*"

They were divided into clans, as in Scotland. Each parish had its head man. My father was engaged in this war, so I am competent to speak of it.

CHAPTER V.

THEIR LIFE DURING THE WAR.

MANY of the peasants were only armed with pikes; there were, however, plenty of good fowling-pieces. The poachers of the Bocage, and the smugglers of Loroux were excellent shots. They were strange fighters, terrible, and courageous. The decree for the raising of three hundred thousand men had given the signal for the tocsin to be rung in six hundred villages. The conflagration burst forth in every part at the same moment. Poitou and Anjou exploded on the same day. The first growling of the storm was heard on the 8th July, 1792, one month before the 10th August, in the Plain of Kerbader. Alain Redeler, whose name is now almost forgotten, was the forerunner of La Rochejacquelin and Jean Chouan. The Royalists forced all able-bodied men to join their ranks under pain of death. They seized on all horses, carts, harness, and provisions. Sapinaud had three thousand men, and Stofflet ten thousand at once, and Charette was master of Noirmoutier. The Viscount de Scépeaux raised Haut Anjou; the Chevalier de Deiuzié the spot between Vilaine and Loire; Trestan l'Hermite the Bas Maine; the barber Gaston the town of Guémenée; and Abbé Bernier all the rest of the country. To raise a multitude of men but little trouble was necessary. They placed in the Pyx of a sworn priest, —"a priest swearer," as the people called them—a great black cat, which jumped suddenly out during the mass. "It is the devil!" said the peasants, and all the parish rose. Words breathing fire issued from the confessional. In order to attack the *Blues*, and to leap over the ravines, they carried a staff fifteen feet long, which they called a *ferte*, or leaping-pole, and used either for attack or retreat. In the most desperate affrays, when the peasants were attacking the republican squares, if they chanced to find a cross or a chapel, they fell upon their knees, and prayed even under the fire of the enemy. When they had told their beads, those who were not killed, rose to their feet and rushed upon the enemy. Alas, what giants these men were! They loaded their guns as they ran, it was a knack they had. They could be made to believe whatever their leaders told them. Their priests showed them others, whose necks they had stained with a tight red cord, and said to them, "*These are men who have come to life again, after having been guillotined.*" They had their chivalric feelings, and admired Feogue, a Republican standard-bearer, who

allowed himself to be cut down without letting go his flag. The peasants, too, had their jokes; they called the Republicans and married priests "*Des sans calotes devenus sans culotes.*"

At first they were afraid of the cannon, then they rushed at them with their sticks, and captured them. The first one that they took was a fine bronze one, which they called "The Missionary;" then there was another which dated from the Catholic wars, and had the arms of Richelieu and a figure of the Virgin Mary engraved on it; this they named "Marie Jeanne." When they were defeated at Fontenay they lost Marie Jeanne, and six hundred peasants died round her sooner than yield. Then they attacked and retook Fontenay in order to recover their beloved gun, and brought it back beneath a banner embroidered with "fleur de lys," covered with flowers, and made all the women who passed kiss it. Two cannon, however, were but a scanty supply. Stofflet had been the capturer of Marie Jeanne, and Cathelineau, envious of his success, started out from Pin en Marge, attacked Jallais, and took a third. Forest made a raid on Saint Florent, and secured a fourth. Two other leaders, Choupée and Saint Pol did even better; they imitated cannon with trunks of trees, with dummy figures for gunners, and caused the *Blues* to fall back upon Mareuil. This was the period of their great success.

Later on, when Chalbos routed the army of La Marsonnière, the peasants left behind them on that dishonoured field thirty-two cannons with the English arms engraved on them. At that time England paid a subsidy to the French princes, and as Nautiat wrote on the 10th of May, 1794, "sent funds to Monseignor because M. Pitt had been told that it was right to do so." Mellinet said in his report of March 31st, "The war-cry of the insurgents is '*Long live the English!*'" The peasants lost much time in plundering. The men so strict in their religious duties were robbers. Savages have their vices. It is by pandering to these that civilisation takes possession of them later. Puysaye says in his book (volume ii., page 187), "I several times saved the town of Plélan from plunder," and further, on page 434, he explains why he did not enter Montfort. "I made a circuit to prevent their pillaging the houses of the Jacobins." They plundered Cholet, and sacked Challans. After having been repulsed at Granville they pillaged Ville Dieu.

They styled those of the country people who favoured the Republic the *Jacobin lot*, and slaughtered them pitilessly. They loved battle like soldiers, and murdered like brigands. To shoot the clowns, that is, the townspeople, gave them great pleasure, they called it "Abjuring Lent." At Fontenay one of their priests, Father Barbotin, cut down an old man with a sabre stroke. At Saint Germain sur Ile, one of their noble captains shot a lawyer of the Commune, and robbed him of his watch. At Machecoul, they slaughtered the Republicans with regularity for five weeks, shooting thirty a day; each lot of thirty they called "*a rosary.*" They drew up each party with their back against a trench that had been dug, and shot them; the victims fell into the trench sometimes living, and were buried alive. We have seen such deeds repeated in our own times. Joubert, the president of the district, had his hands sawn off at the wrist. They put sharp handcuffs, manufactured expressly, on the *Blues* whom they made prisoners. He massacred them in the public streets, shouting the cries customary in the chase on the death of the stag. Charette, who signed himself "*Fraternité, the chevalier Charette,*" and who wore round his head a handkerchief like Marat, pulled down over his brows, burnt the city of Pornic with its inhabitants in their houses. During this time Carrier was committing equal atrocities. Terror replied to terror. The Breton rebel had all the appearance of a Greek insurgent, with his short jacket, his gun slung at his back, his gaiters and loose trousers resembling closely the *fustanella.* The Breton lad looked much like a *Klepht.* Henri de la Rochejacquelin, when one-and-twenty, set out for the seat of war, armed with a cudgel and a pair of pistols. The Vendéan army comprised one hundred and fifty-four divisions. They invested cities in proper form, and blockaded Bressuire for three days. On a Good Friday, ten thousand peasants bombarded the town of Sables with red

hot shot. They succeeded in a single day in destroying fourteen republican cantonments from Montigny to Courbeveilles. On Thouars, on the high wall surrounding the city, this wonderful dialogue was heard between La Rochejacquelin and a peasant lad. "Carle!" "Here I am." "Stand so that I may get on your back." "Jump then. Give me your gun." "Here it is!" and La Rochejacquelin leapt into the town, and the towers which Du Guescquelein had besieged were taken without the assistance of scaling ladders. A cartridge was of more value to them than gold louis. They shed tears where they moved out of sight of the village steeple. To fly seemed to them perfectly simple. On these occasions their chiefs would cry out to them, —"*Throw away your sabots, but stick to your muskets.*" When ammunition failed, they told their beads, and made a dash for the powder in the tumbrils of the Republican artillery.

Later on, d'Elbee asked for powder from the English. When the enemy advanced, if they had wounded men, they hid them in the standing crops, or amongst the ferns, and when the affair was over, came back to pick them up. They had no regular uniform. Their clothes were in tatters. Peasants and nobles clothed themselves in the first rag that they came across. Roger Mouliniers was dressed in a turban and a jacket taken from the wardrobe of the theatre of La Flèche. The Chevalier de Beauvilliers wore a lawyer's gown, and put a woman's headdress over his woollen cap. All wore the scarf and the white belt; the different ranks were distinguished by the number of knots. Stofflet had a red knot, La Rochejacquelin a black one. Wimpfeu, who was half a Girondist, and who for that matter never left Normandy, wore the leather armpieces of the Carabots of Caen. Women served in their ranks. Madame de Lescure, who became Madame de la Rochejacquelin; Thérèse Mollieu, the mistress of La Rouarie; she it was who burnt the list of the heads of the parishes; Madame de Rochefoucauld, young and handsome, who, sword in hand, rallied the peasants at the foot of the great tower of the Castle of Puy Rousseau; and that Antoinette Adams, called the Chevalier Adams, who was so brave, that when she was captured, they permitted her to be shot standing, out of respect for her courage. These epic times were barbarous ones. Men seemed to have gone mad. Madame de Lescure made her horse trample on the helpless Republican bodies stretched across her path; she said that "*they were dead,*" but they might have been only wounded. Sometimes the men were treacherous, but the women never. Mademoiselle Fleury, of the French Theatre, left La Rouarie for Marat, but this was from passion. The leaders were often as ignorant as their soldiers. Monsieur de Sapinaud did not know how to spell; he wrote, "*We ave them on our cide.*" The chiefs disliked each other. The leaders from the Marais cried, "*Down with those from high-lying lands.*" Their cavalry was scanty and hard to form. Puysaye wrote, "*Many a man who would gladly give me his two sons, grows cold when I ask for one of his horses.*" Leaping poles, scythes, forks, guns old and new, hunting knives, pits, bludgeons bound with iron and heavily-loaded, were their arms. Some of them wore round their necks crosses made of human bones. They rushed to the onset suddenly with loud shouts, rising upon all sides, from the woods, the hills, the bushes, the hollow ways; killed and massacred, and in a moment had again disappeared. When they marched through a Republican town, they cut down the Tree of Liberty, set fire to it, and danced round it as it blazed. All their habits were nocturnal. The Vendéan rule of war was always to make an unexpected appearance. They would march fifteen leagues in silence, hardly stirring a blade of grass as they passed. When evening came and the leaders had settled what Republican post should be surprised the next morning, the men loaded their guns, muttered their prayers, pulled off their wooden shoes, and passed in a long line through the woods, walking barefooted over the heath and moss without a sound, without a word, with hardly a sound of breathing. It was a march of cats through the darkness.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SPIRIT OF THE SOIL PASSES INTO THE INHABITANT.

THE number of Vendéans in rebellion could not be estimated at less than five hundred thousand men, women, and children. Half a million of combatants in the total arrived at by Tuffin de la Rouarie.

The federalists helped them. La Vendée had the Gironde as an ally. La Lozère sent thirty thousand men into the Bocage —eight departments united, five in Brittany and three in Normandy. Evreux, which fraternised with Caen, was represented during the rebellion by Chaumont, its Mayor, and Gardembas, a man of position, Buzot, Gorsas, and Barbaroux at Caen, Brissot at Moulins, Chouan at Lyon, Rabout Saint Étienne at Nismes, Meillan and Duchatel in Brittany; all these mouths breathing at the same moment increased the flame of the furnace. There were two La Vendées: the great one which carried on the war of the forests, and the small one which waged the guerilla warfare of the thickets; this is the line of difference between Charette and Jean Chouan. The little La Vendée was simple the great one corrupt; the little one was worth the most. Charette was created a marquis, a Lieutenant-General of the army of the King, and a Grand Cross of Saint Louis. Jean Chouan remained Jean Chouan; Charette was hardly more than a bandit; Jean Chouan was more like a knight of old. As to the magnanimous chiefs, Bonchamps, Lescure, La Rochejacquelin, they deceived themselves. The Grand Catholic Army was a mad scheme, and disaster was certain to pursue it. Can any one picture to themselves a storm of peasants attacking Paris; a coalition laying siege to the Pantheon; a pack of psalm-singers baying around the Marseillaise; a cohort of wooden shoes dashing against regiments of intellect. Le Mans and Savenay punished this act of madness. This crossing of the Loire was impracticable for La Vendée. Everything was possible except that leap. Civil War does not conquer. To cross the Rhine makes a Cæsar, and strengthens a Napoleon; the attempt to pass the Loire ended in the death of La Rochejacquelin.

La Vendée's real strength lay at home; there she was invulnerable and invincible. The Vendéan at home was a smuggler, a labourer, a shepherd, a poacher, a born skirmisher, goatherd, bell-ringer, peasant, spy, assassin, sacristan, and savage beast of the forest.

La Rochejacquelin was but Achilles, Jean Chouan was Proteus.

Rebellion failed in La Vendée. Other insurrections succeeded, for example, that of Switzerland. There is this difference between the rebel of the mountain, like the Swiss, and the rebel of the forests, like the Vendéan—that almost always fatal influence of the third party; the one fights for an ideal, and the other for prejudice; the one hovers, the other crawls; the one fights for all humanity, the other for his solitary self. The one wishes for liberty, the other for isolation; the one defends the commune, the other the parish. "The commune, the commune!" cried the heroes of Morat. The one has to deal with precipices, the other with quagmires; the one is the man of torrents and foaming streams, the other of stagnant pools, the homes of disease, and pestilence; the one has his head in the blue empyrean, the other in the gloomy thicket; the one is exalted on a lofty summit, the other buried in the gloomy shadow. There is a difference in the education that we receive from heights and shadows. The mountain is a fortress, the forest an ambush. The one fills you with courage, the other teaches you cunning. Ancient mythology placed the dwellings of the gods on heights, but allowed the satyrs to dwell in the copses. The satyr is the savage, half man and half beast.

Free countries have their Alps, their Apennines, their Pyrenees, and their Olympus. Parnassus is a mountain. Mont Blanc is the gigantic ally of William Tell. Both above and below in those tremendous struggles of mind against darkness which fill the poems of India, we perceive the Himalayas; Greece, Spain, Italy, and Helvetia are represented by the mountain; Cimmeria, Germany, or Brittany by the forest, and that is a type of barbarism. The configuration of the soil forms an excuse for the deeds of many men. It is more his accomplice than people are

disposed to imagine. In the presence of certain rugged landscapes one is tempted to forgive man, and to blame creation; one feels a kind of dull provocation on the part of nature. The desert sometimes acts unhealthily upon conscience, especially upon a conscience that is only half enlightened. Conscience may be a giant, and then it produces a Jesus or a Socrates; it may be a pigmy, and then it forms an Atreus or a Judas. A narrow conscience soon becomes of a reptile turn; twilight forests, bushes, thorns, the marshes under the branches, all have a fatal attraction for it, and it passes through the deadly infiltrations of evil influences. Optical illusions, inexplicable mirages, the terrors of the hour or scene, hurl man into a sort of terror, half religious, half bestial, which produce in ordinary times superstition, and in violent epochs, cruelty and brutality. Delusions wave on high the torch that lights the road to murder. The brigand's brain is seized by a vertigo. The mighty spirit of nature has a twofold power, which dazzles great minds, and blinds uncultivated souls. When a man is ignorant, when the desert is a visionary expanse, the gloom of solitude adds to the darkness of the mind; hence, in the depths of man's mind, huge fissures open. Certain aspects in the rocks, in the ravines, in the thickets, in commons, which strike you with terror as you pass through them at night, urge on men to commit actions at once foolish and brutal. You may almost be led to believe that these are accursed spots.

How many tragic scenes has not that gloomy hill that stands between Baignous and Plelán witnessed?

Widely-spread horizons lead on the soul to broad ideas; circumscribed aspects engender narrow feelings, which sometimes condemn great hearts to be bounded by small souls. Jean Chouan is an example of this.

Broad ideas are detested by narrow ones; this is indeed the real battle of progress.

Vicinity, country, in these two words are roused up all the war of La Vendée—the quarrel of the local idea against the universal idea; Peasants against Patriots.

CHAPTER VII.

LA VENDÉE HAS FINISHED BRITTANY.

Brittany is an old rebel. Each time that she rose in insurrection for two thousand years she was in the right, but the last time she was wrong. But at the bottom, against the Revolution as against the monarchy; against the delegates as against the Governors, dukes and peers; against the issue of assignats; against the farming of the taxes, whoever were the personages who made war,—Nicolas Rapin, François de la Noue, Captain Pluviant, the Lady of Garnache, or Stofflet, Coquereau, or Lechanchlier de Pieurville, under Mons. de Rohan against the King; or under Mons. de la Rochejacquelin for the King—Brittany always waged the same kind of war—local prejudice against popular feeling. Then ancient provinces were like a stagnant pool, the still waters disliked to be stirred up; the wind which blew over them put no life into them, they only vexed them. Finisterre was the boundary of France, there the land allotted to man ended, and the march of ages halted. "Halt!" cried the ocean to the land, and barbarism, to civilisation. Every time that Paris, the common centre, makes a movement, whether that movement arises from loyalty, or from republicanism, whether it has reference to despotism or to liberty, there is something new in it, and Brittany bristles up against it. "Leave us alone, what do they want?" And Le Marais seizes its fork, Le Bocage grasps its carbine. All efforts to initiate an improvement in legislation and education, all our encyclopædias, our philosophies, our genius, our glories, will fail before Houroux; the tocsin of Bazouges will threaten the French Revolution; the moors of Faou rise in rebellion against voices of our cities; and the bells of Haut des Pères proclaim war against the Towers of the Louvre.

Terrible blindness!

The Vendéan rebellion was entirelythe result of a fearful misunderstanding. A colossal boiling over, a juggling of Titans, a boundless rebellion, destined hardly to leave a word in history's page, except the one *La Vendée*—an illustrious and yet a

disgraceful word. A place giving itself up to death for the sake of those who were absent, devoting itself to selfishness, passing its time in making to cowardice the offer of the most boundless bravery; without management, without strategy, without tactics, without a plan, without aim, without leader, without responsibility; showing to what point Will can be powerless, chivalrous, yet savage. Absurdity at its height, the building up of black shadows against the light. Ignorance making a desperate resistance at once idiotic, though grand, against justice, right, reason, and deliverance; the terror of eight years; the rendering desolate of fourteen departments; the devastation of fields, the ruin of towns, the pillage of houses, the massacre of women and children; the burning brand applied to the thatch, the sword piercing the heart, civilisation standing aghast; all fulfilling the hopes of Pitt; such was this war, the last unreasonable effort of a parricide.

BOOK II.

THE THREE CHILDREN.

CHAPTER I.

PLUS QUAM CIVILIA BELLA.

THE spring of 1792 had been a very rainy one, the spring of 1793 was very hot. Owing to the civil war, roads, so to speak, had ceased to exist in Brittany. Thanks, however, to the fineness of the weather, travellers were able to get about somehow. You cannot have a better road than dried-up fields.

At the close of a lovely day in July, about an hour after sunset, a horseman, who came from the direction of Avranches, halted before a little inn called the Croix-Branchard, which stood at the entrance to Pontorson, and whose sign bore this inscription which was still to be seen only a few years back,—"*Good cider for sale.*" The day had been very hot, but as evening came on a breeze had commenced to spring up. The traveller was enveloped in a long cloak which fell over the back of the saddle. He wore a broad-brimmed hat with a tricoloured cockade in it, which showed a certain amount of courage considering the state of the country, which was full of hedges with guns behind them for which a tricoloured cockade was a favourite target; the cloak was fastened at the neck, but permitted his arms to remain free, and below could be perceived a tricoloured sash with the butts of two pistols protuding from it. The point of the scabbard of a sabre hung down below the cloak. At the sound of the horse's hoofs, the door of the inn opened, and the host appeared on the threshold. It was the hour between day and night, when it is dark in the house and light outside. The landlord glanced at the cockade.

"Do you stop here, citizen?" asked he.

"No."

"Which way do you go then?"

"To Dol."

"In that case go back to Avranches, or stay at Pontorson."

"For what reason?"

"Because there is fighting going on at Dol."

"Ah, indeed?" said the horseman. Then he added, "Give my horse some oats."

The landlord brought out the trough, emptied a bag of oats into it, and unbridled the horse, which snuffed at the food and then began to eat. The conversation continued.

"Citizen, was that horse requisitioned?"

"No."

"Is it yours, then?"

"I bought him and paid for him."

"Where do you come from?"

"From Paris."

"Not straight?"

"No."

"I can well understand that, for the communcations is cut off, but the post still goes, does it not?"

"As far as Alençon, no further."

"Ah! there will soon be no more posts in France, and no more horses either. You pay six hundred francs now for a horse worth three, and forage of all kinds has risen to an awful price. I was the master of a posting-house, and now I am a petty tavern-keeper; out of thirteen hundred and thirteen post-masters that there used to be, two hundred have sent in their resignation. You have, I suppose, citizen, posted under the new rules?"

"From the 1st of May, yes."

"Twenty sous a post for a carriage, twelve sous for a two-wheeled conveyance, and five for a cart. You bought your horse at Alençon, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And have been riding all day?"

"Since early morning."

"And yesterday too?"

"Yes, and the day before."

"Yes, I can see that; you came by Domfront and Mortain?"

"And Avranches."

"Listen to my advice, citizen, take a rest; you must be tired; your horse is, I can see."

"Horses have a right to be tired, men have not."

The eyes of the landlord turned again upon the traveller; his face was calm and serious, and his hair was quite grey.

The tavern-keeper looked forward along the road, which was deserted as far as the eye would reach, and said, "You travel alone like this?"

"I have an escort."

"Where is it?"

"It is my sword and pistols."

The host went and got a bucket of water, and gave the horse a drink, and whilst he was doing so looked attentively at the traveller, and muttered to himself, "It is curious, but he looks very like a priest."

The horseman continued, "You say that they are fighting at Dol?"

"Yes, they ought to be beginning now."

"Who is it that is fighting?"

"One ex-noble against another."

"What do you say?"

"I say that an ex-noble, who is in the service of the Republic, is fighting with another who serves the King."

"But there is no longer a king."

"There is the little fellow; but the most curious thing is that these ex-nobles are relatives."

The horseman seemed to grow interested as the landlord continued, "One is young, the other is old. It is the grand-nephew who is fighting against his great-uncle. The uncle is a Royalist, the nephew a Patriot. The uncle commands the *Whites*, the nephew the *Blues*. They give no quarter to each other; it is a war of extermination.

"A war to the death?"

"That is it, citizen. Would you like to see the little courtesies that they exchange? This is a proclamation that the old one found means to post up on all the trees and houses about; there was one even posted on my door."

The landlord raised his lantern to a square piece of paper fastened on to his door, and as the letters of the writing were large, there was no difficulty in reading it. The horseman, bending from his saddle, perused it.

"The Marquis of Lantenac has the honour to inform his grand-nephew, Mons. the Viscount Gauvain, that if he, the Marquis, has the good fortune to make him prisoner, he will have the said Viscount shot on the spot."

"Here is the reply," continued the landlord; and turning a little he threw the light of his lantern upon another bill placed by the side of the other. The traveller read,—

"Gauvain warns Lantenac that if he is taken he will be shot at once."

"It was yesterday," said the tavern-keeper "that the first one was posted on my door, and this morning the second one was there; they did not take long in answering it, did they?"

The traveller muttered to himself a few words, some of which the landlord could not catch, and those which he did hear he could not understand.

"Yes, it is no longer a war of countries, it is a war of families. It is a necessity, and it is well. The people grow young when prices like these are paid;" and raising his hand to his hat, the horseman saluted the second proclamation.

The host went on speaking. "Look

you, citizen, this is how things go. In the cities, and the large towns, we are all in favour of the Revolution; in the country they are against it; that is to say, in the towns we are Frenchmen, and in the villages they are Bretons. It is a war of citizens against peasants; they call us counter jumpers, we call them clowns; but the aristocrats and the priests make common cause with them."

"Not all of them," interrupted the horseman.

"No, not all, since we have a viscount fighting against a marquis."

"And which of them do you think will be the winner?" asked the traveller.

"Up to the present the viscount has had the best of it, but his work has not been easy; the old man is a hard nut to crack. These people, that is to say the Gauvain Family, are natives of these parts; there is the elder and the younger branch. Of the former the Marquis de Lantenac is the head. Of the latter, the Viscount Gauvain; and to-day these two branches are fighting. You don't see such a thing amongst the trees, but only amongst men. This Marquis of Lantenac is a power amongst the peasants of Brittany, he is in their eyes a real prince. The day of his landing, he had eight thousand men round him at once, and in a week, three hundred parishes raised the flag of revolt. If he had been able to seize on any part of the coast, the English troops would have been disembarked. Happily this Gauvain was on the spot, who, by a strange chance, is his great-nephew. He is the republican commandant, and he stopped the way of his great-uncle. And then by good luck, Lantenac, on his arrival, had a number of prisoners murdered, and amongst these had two women shot, one of whom had three children that had been adopted by a Parisian Regiment, which made it furious. It had named itself the Regiment of the Red Cap. There are very few of the men of the regiment surviving, but they are terrible fellows with the bayonet. They have been attached to the column commanded by Gauvain. Nothing can withstand their onset. Their desire is to avenge the women, and to rescue the children; no one knows what the old man has done with the little ones. This is what angered these Parisian Grenadiers. Had these small children not been mixed up in the matter, the war would not have been what it is. The Viscount is a good and gallant young man, but the old Marquis is a terrible fellow. The peasants term it the war of Saint Michael against Beelzebub. You know, perhaps, that Saint Michael is the patron saint of these parts. There is a mountain named after him in the middle of the sea in a bay. They say that after he had conquered the devil, he buried him close here, under another mountain, which they call Tombelaine."

"Yes," answered the horseman in a low voice, "Tumba Beleni, the tomb of Belinus, of Belus, of Bel, of Belial, of Beelzebub."

"I see that you know all about it," said the landlord, adding to himself, "Certainly he is a priest, he understands Latin" Then he continued, "Well, citizen, with the peasants the war has begun again. It is useless for me to tell you that, in their ideas, Saint Michael commands for the King, and Beelzebub for the republicans; but if there is a fiend it is Lantenac, and if there is an angel it is Gauvain; but you are taking nothing, citizen."

"I have my flask, and a piece of bread; but you do not tell me what is going on at Dol."

"Well, this Gauvain commands the Expeditionary Column of the coast. Lantenac's object was to raise a general insurrection, to support Lower Brittany by Lower Normandy, open the door to Pitt, and to push on the Vendean Army with twenty thousand English and two hundred thousand peasants. Gauvain cut this plan short. He holds the coast, and drives Lantenac into the interior of the country, and the English into the sea. Lantenac had occupied a position here, but Gauvain dislodged him from it, and has retaken Pont au Beau, has driven him out of Avranches, has hunted him from Villedieu, and has prevented his getting to Granville. He is manœuvering to shut him up in the Forest of Fougères, and to surround him. All was going on well yesterday, and Gauvain was here with his column; all of a sudden there was an alert, the old man, who knows what he is about, scored a point, and we learn that he has moved on

Dol. If he takes it, and establishes a battery on Mount Dol,—for he has guns,—there is a point on the coast at once for the English to land at, and all will be lost. For that reason, as there was not a moment to be lost, Gauvain, who is a man with a head on his shoulders, followed no counsel but his own, asked for no orders, and waited for none; but sounded the "boot and saddle," harnessed his horses to the guns, collected his men together, drew his sword, and whilst Lantenac is attacking Dol, Gauvain will attack Lantenac. It is at Dol that these two Bretons will knock their heads together; it will be a rough shock; I expect that they are at it now."

"How long will it take me to reach Dol?"

"A troop with baggage waggons will take three hours at the least; but they must be there now."

The traveller listened attentively, and then remarked, "I really think I hear the fire of artillery."

The landlord listened in his turn, "Yes, citizen, and there is musketry too; they have drawn up the curtain. You had better stay the night here. There will be nothing to gain there."

"I cannot stop, I must keep on my way."

"You are wrong; I do not know your business, but the danger is great; and unless it concerns what you hold dearest in the world . . ."

"It is that of which I am thinking," answered the horseman.

"It is a question of your son, perhaps?"

"Very nearly," answered the traveller.

The landlord raised his head once more, and muttered to himself, "And yet he looks like a priest." Then after a little reflection he added "After all, priests may have children."

"Put on the bridle again," said the traveller. "How much do I owe you?" Then he paid.

The landlord put the trough and the bucket back against the wall, and then came up to the traveller. "Since you have made up your mind to go, listen to my advice. It is plain to me that you are going to Saint Malo. Well, do not go by Dol; there are two roads, the one through Dol, and the one by the sea shore, one is no longer than the other. The road by the sea passes by Saint Georges de Brehaigne, Cherrueix, and Hirelle Vivier. You leave Dol to the south, and Cancale to the north. Citizen, at the end of the street you will find the spot where the two roads divide, that of Dol on the left, that of Saint George de Brehaigne on the right. If you go to Dol—pray listen to me—you will come right amongst the fighting; that is why you must not go to the left, but to the right."

"I thank you," answered the traveller, and he spurred his horse forward.

Night had now come on, and he disappeared into the darkness.

The inn-keeper lost sight of him.

When the horseman reached the end of the street where the two roads branched off, he heard the voice of his host shouting to him from far behind,—

"Take the right-hand road!" But the traveller turned his horse into the left-hand one.

CHAPTER II.

DOL.

Dol, a Spanish city of France in Brittany, as the registers term it, is not a city, but a street. A great old Gothic street, bordered on both sides by houses with porticos irregularly placed, which form elbows and angles in it. The remainder of the town is nothing but a network of houses attached to the main central street, and running into it, as brooks run into a river. The city, without walls or gates, and overlooked by Mount Dol, could not have sustained a regular siege, but the street might have endured one. The strange projections of the houses, which fifty years back were still in existence, and their double balconies supported on pillars, formed a position which in street warfare was capable of offering stout resistance. Each house, in fact, was a stronghold, and it would be necessary to take one after the other. The old market-place was nearly in the centre of the street.

The inn-keeper of the Croix Branchard had spoken the truth; there was a fierce

struggle going on in Dol at this time, a nocturnal duel between the *Whites*, who had arrived in the morning, and the *Blues*, who had followed in the evening, was taking place in the town. The sides were unequal. The *Whites* numbered six thousand, the *Blues* fifteen hundred; but there was equality in point of enthusiastic obstinacy. Strange to say, it was the fifteen hundred that had attacked the six thousand. On one side was a cohort, on the other a phalanx. On the one side six thousand peasants, with the Sacred Heart sewn upon their leather coats, their white scarves, the sacred devices on their armlets, their broad-brimmed hats, their rosaries at their waists; having more pitchforks than bayonets, carbines without bayonets, dragging their artillery along by ropes, badly equipped, badly disciplined, but full of enthusiasm. On the other side fifteen hundred soldiers, with three-cornered hats, and cockades of the republican tricolour, coats with broad skirts, and wide lapels, cross belts, swords with copper hilts, and muskets with long bayonets; drilled, disciplined, and obedient, but fierce in action, knowing how to obey their officers, like those who, in their turn, know how to command. Volunteers, but volunteers of their country, in rags, and without shoes. Chivalrous peasants fighting for the monarchy, barefooted heroes combating for the Revolution; and each of these two parties were inspired by the courageous spirit of their leader, the Royalists by an old, the Republicans by a young man. On one side Lantenac, on the other Gauvain.

The Revolution had among its ranks figures of youthful Titans, like Danton, Saint Just, and Robespierre, young ideal ones, like those of Hoche and Marceau. Gauvain was one of these.

He was thirty years of age, with the muscular chest of a Hercules, the calm eye of a prophet, and the smile of a child; he neither smoked, drank, nor swore. Through all the hardships of war, he was never without his dressing-case. He took great care of his teeth, nails, and hair, which latter was brown, fine, and long; and during the halts he would shake his captain's uniform, which was pierced with balls, and white with dust. Always rushing headlong into action, he had never yet received a wound. His soft voice, when occasion required, could assume the harsh tones of command. He set the example of sleeping on the bare earth, in wind, or rain, or snow, wrapped in his cloak, with his handsome head pillowed upon a stone. With his drawn sabre in his hand his whole appearance changed, he had that half-effeminate appearance which looks so formidable in battle. With all his youth he was a deep thinker and a philosopher,—Alcibiades in appearance, Socrates in speech. In all those wonderful creations of the French Revolution, this young man had at once assumed the position of a leader. His columns, formed by himself, had all the qualities of a Roman legion, it possessed cavalry and infantry, scouts, pioneers, sappers and miners, and as the legion had its catapults, so Gauvain had his artillery. Three field-pieces fully equipped rendered the column formidable, and at the same time left it easy to handle.

Lantenac also was a thoroughly trained soldier, he was both wary and courageous. Old soldiers have more coolness than young ones because they are further from life's beginning, and more audacity because they are nearer to death. For what have they to lose? But very little. Hence Lantenac's movements were at once bold and skilful. But, as a rule, almost always without exception, in this hand-to-hand encounter between youth and age, Gauvain had the advantage. It was more luck than anything else. All good fortune, even successes which are sometimes dangerous, go to youth. Victory has many of the attributes of a woman.

Lantenac was furious with Gauvain; first because Gauvain beat him, secondly because he was his relative. "What was his motive in turning Jacobin, this Gauvain, this scoundrel, his heir, for the marquis had no children—his grand-nephew, almost his grandson? "*Ah*" exclaimed this quasi grandfather, "*if I could put my hands on him, I would kill him like a dog!*"

The Revolution was right in feeling uneasy regarding this Marquis de Lantenac Scarce had he landed than he made everything shake around him. His name had spread through the Vendéan insurrection like the train to a powder magazine, and

Lantenac at once became the centre of the rebellion. In a revolt of this kind, where every one is jealous of the other, and each leader holds his own thicket or ravine, the arrival of a superior rallies the dispersed chiefs who have been equals amongst themselves. Almost all the captains of the woods joined Lantenac, and whether near or far away, obeyed his orders. One only had left him, and that was the first man that had joined him—Gavard. Why had he done so? Gavard had been a confidential agent, he had known all the secrets, and was cognisant of all the plans of civil war which Lantenac appeared to alter and supplant. You cannot take over a man like Gavard. The shoe of La Rouarie did not fit Lantenac, so Gavard went to rejoin Bonchamp. Lantenac was a soldier of the school of Frederic II. He endeavoured to combine the great, with the little war; he would not have a heterogeneous collection of men without form or order, like the Great Catholic and Royal Army, a mere crowd destined to be exterminated, nor a troop of skirmishers sprinkled among the hedges and thickets, useful to harass the enemy, but powerless to destroy them. Guerrilla warfare gains no definite advantage; it commences by attacking a Republic, and ends by plundering a stage-coach.

Lantenac did not agree with the other leaders in the conduct of the Breton war. La Rochejacquelin, was for fighting in the open; Jean Chouan was all for the forest. Lantenac would have neither the one nor the other. He desired systematic warfare; he would use the peasant, but he meant to depend on the soldier; he wanted irregular troops for strategic purposes, but regiments for manœuvring. He found the bands of villagers admirable for sudden attacks, for ambuscades, or surprises, for they could be quickly mustered, and as rapidly dispersed. But he could not but feel that they were wanting in solidity; they were like water in his hand; his wish was to create a solid base in this dispersed and scattered warfare. He wanted to combine regular troops with the wild army of the woods, and of these he would make a pivot upon which he could move his peasant forces. It was a deep and skilful conception, and had it succeeded, La Vendée would never have been conquered.

But where was he to get regular troops? where find soldiers? where procure regiments? where put his hands upon a ready-made army? From England. And this was Lantenac's fixed idea. To get the English to land. Thus we smooth over our conscience, and the white cockade caused him to forget the red coat of the foreigner.

Lantenac had but one plan—to seize upon some point of the coast, and to give it over to Pitt. And for this reason, seeing Dol without a garrison, he threw himself into it, so that by seizing Dol, he might secure Mount Dol, and by Mount Dol gain possession of a portion of the coast.

He had chosen an excellent position. A battery on Mount Dol would sweep on, one side the coast of Fresnois, on the other that of Saint Brelade; would keep at a distance the cruisers from Cancale, and so would open out the coast for the landing of troops from Raz sur Coesnon to Saint Mêloir des Ondes.

To execute this decisive stroke Lantenac had brought with him a force of a little over six thousand men, the strongest and boldest of the bands which he had at his disposal, and all his artillery, ten sixteen-pounders, an eight-pounder, and a four-pounder. He intended to erect a battery upon Mount Dol, on the principle that a thousand shots fired from ten guns produce more effect than fifteen hundred fired by five. Success appeared absolutely certain. He had six thousand men. Towards Avranches he had only Gauvain to fear with his fifteen hundred troops, and Léchelle in the direction of Dinan. Certainly Léchelle had twenty-five thousand men, but he was twenty leagues away. And so Lantenac was tolerably confident; against Léchelle's numbers, he put the distance, with Gauvain, the smallness of his force against his close proximity. It may be added that Léchelle was an imbecile, who, later on, permitted all his troops to be massacred in the plain of Croix Bataille,—a mistake he atoned for by committing suicide.

So Lantenac felt perfectly safe. His entrance into Dol was fierce and sudden.

The Marquis de Lantenac had a reputation for ferocity, and he was known to be entirely pitiless. There was no attempt at resistance. The terrified inhabitants barricaded themselves in their houses. The six thousand Vendéans established themselves in the town with all the confusion of a rustic crowd.

The town looked as if a fair was being held there. The men had no quartermasters, no allotted camping ground; they bivouacked where they pleased, cooked their food in the open, scattered themselves among the churches, and threw down their guns for the purpose of telling their beads. Lantenac had hastily gone off with some of his artillery officers to reconnoitre Mount Dol, leaving his men in charge of Gouge le Bruant, whom he had appointed sergeant-major. This man, Gouge le Bruant, has a vague trace in the page of history. He had two nicknames "*Break the Blues*," on account of his carnage of the Patriots, and *Imânus*, because there was something about him indescribably revolting. Imânus derived from *Immanis*, is an old Lower Normandy word, which signifies superhuman ugliness, something almost divine in its hideousness, a demon, a satyr, an ogre. A very ancient manuscript says, "*With my two eyes I saw Imânus.*"* The old men of the Bocage do not now know who Gouge le Bruant was, nor what Break the Blues, meant, but they have a confused idea of Imânus. Imânus is mixed up with all the local superstitions. At Trémorel, and Plumaugat, they still speak of Gouge le Bruant, who has left the mark of his sinister passage in both of these villages. In La Vendée, the people were half uncivilised, but Gouge le Bruant was a veritable savage. He was a species of Indian Chief, tattooed with the Christian cross, and the lilies of France. His features gleamed with a hideous and quasi supernatural light, which gave no evidence of a human soul existing in the system. He was demoniacally brave in battle, and afterwards revoltingly cruel.

His was a disposition filled with all kinds of tortuous intricacies; capable of every species of devotion, and prone to every kind of fanatical excess. Had he reasoning faculties? Yes, he had; but they moved in a spiral manner like the course of the serpent. His point of departure was—heroism, and his goal—murder. It was impossible to discover how he aimed at his determinations, they were sometimes sublime from their very monstrosity. He was capable of indulging in every possible unexpected horror; his ferocity resembled that of the heroes of epic poetry. Hence his nickname of Imânus.

The Marquis of Lantenac had the fullest confidence in him on account of his cruelty. It is perfectly true that in cruelty and ferocity, Imânus acknowledged no master; but in strategy and tactics he was not so well versed; hence perhaps the marquis had made a mistake in giving him the post of sergeant-major. Be that as it may, he left Imânus in charge, with orders to take his place, and to keep an eye on everything.

Gouge le Bruant, was more of a fighting man than a tactician, and was more fitted to cut the throats of a clan, than to take charge of a town; but for all that, he posted guards.

As the evening came on, the Marquis de Lantenac was returning to Dol, after having fixed upon the site of his battery, when he was startled by the roar of artillery. He looked to the front. A cloud of smoke with a red glare in it, was rising from the main street. The town had been surprised, attacked, and carried, and they were fighting in the streets. Though Lantenac was a man difficult to astonish, he was for the moment stupefied. He had not foreseen anything of the kind. Who could the enemy be? evidently not Gauvain. No man in his senses would attack a force that out-numbered him by four to one. Could it be Léchelle? But it was impossible for him to have made such a forced march. That it was Léchelle's division was improbable, Gauvain's, impossible. Lantenac spurred on his horse. On the road he met some of the inhabitants flying from the town, and questioned them; but they were half mad with terror, and could only cry out, "The *Blues*, the *Blues!*" When he arrived the position was critical, and this is what had happened.

* D'mes daeux iers j'vis l'imânus.

CHAPTER III.

SMALL FORCES, AND GREAT BATTLES.

Upon arriving at Dol, as has been seen, the peasantry dispersed through the town, each man following the dictates of his own will, as always happens when men "*obey from friendship*,"—a favourite mode of expression amongst the Vendéans, a kind of obedience that may make heroes, but never soldiers. They pushed their artillery out of the way with the rest of the baggage under the arches of the old market; and wearied with their march, they were eating, drinking, and telling their beads, lying down in every direction across the principal street, which was rather blocked up than guarded. As the night came on, the majority fell asleep, with their heads resting upon their haversacks; some had their wives beside them, for the Vendéan women often followed the peasant army, and those who were about to become mothers acted as scouts. It was a warm July night, and the stars shone brilliantly in the black-blue sky. The bivouac which more resembled the halt of a caravan than the encampment of an army, peacefully went to sleep. All of a sudden, in the twilight, those who had not yet closed their eyes, saw three pieces of cannon pointing at them from the entrance of the principal street. It was Gauvain's division; he had taken the guards by surprise, and with his columns held the head of the street. A peasant started to his feet, crying, "Who goes there?" and fired his musket; a cannon shot was the reply. Then began a furious fire of musketry; all the sleeping crowd sprang to their feet with a bound. A rough awakening. To fall asleep beneath the stars trembling in the canopy of heaven, and to be awakened by the fire of artillery.

The first moments were truly terrible.

Nothing is more terrific than the purposeless hurryings to and fro of a panic-stricken crowd. They ran to their arms; they shouted; they fled; many fell. The peasants completely surprised, lost their heads, and blindly shot each other. There were some who rushed out of the houses, ran in again, and once more emerged, wandering about in terror in the midst of the tumult. Families vainly shouted for missing members. There was a lugubrious combat, with women and children in the midst of it. The bullets whistled through the air making a fiery track through the darkness. Volleys poured from every dark corner. All was smoke and tumult. The entanglement of the baggage waggons and gun limbers increased the confusion. The horses rushed madly here and there, trampling the wounded beneath their hoofs. Loud cries from prostrate men were heard. Terror on this side, panic on that. Soldiers and officers vainly sought for each other. Strange instances of indifference to danger could be seen here and there. A woman suckled her new-born infant, whilst her husband with his leg shattered, supported himself against a fragment of a wall, and, whilst his life blood ebbed away, calmly reloaded his gun, and fired away at random into the darkness in front of him.

Men lying on their chests rested their guns on the spokes of the wheels, and fired. Every now and then there arose a confused din of shouting, and then the mighty voice of the artillery drowned everything with its roar. It was truly awful.

It was like trees being felled, and one falling on the top of the other. Gauvain, in security, poured in a deadly fire, and suffered comparatively little loss. But in a brief space, the peasants recovered from their panic, and took measures for their defence. They fell back into the market place, a vast stronghold, a forest of stone pillars. There they once more made a stand, anything that resembled a wood gave them confidence. Imânus did his best to fill the place of the absent Lantenac. They had artillery, but to Gauvain's extreme surprise, they made no use of it. This, however, arose from the fact that the artillery officers had all gone with the Marquis to Mount Dol, and the peasants were ignorant how to serve the guns; but they riddled with bullets those of the *Blues* who had turned their guns upon them. The peasants replied to the artillery fire by volleys of musketry. The Vendeans were now under cover; they had piled up the drays, the tumbrils, the wagons the empty casks that they had found in the old market place, and had extemporised

a high barricade, with loop holes, through which they could pass the barrels of their muskets. From these their fire was murderous. All these arrangements were carried out with great rapidity, and in a quarter of an hour the market had been converted into an impregnable position.

Things were now looking serious for Gauvain. The market now turned into a citadel was something that he had not counted on. The peasants were collected together inside, in a solid mass. Gauvain had succeeded in his surprise, but was in danger of being defeated after all. He had dismounted. With his sword in his hand under his crossed arms, he stood looking attentively into the darkness, by the side of a torch which lighted the gunners at their work. His tall figure showing against this light made him clearly visible to the men behind the barricade. He became at once a target for them all, but he took no notice of it. Showers of bullets from the barricade fell on every side of Gauvain as he stood there buried in thought. But against all these muskets he had his artillery, and the cannon ball ever proves the stronger. He who has artillery has victory within his grasp. His well-served battery guaranteed him the superiority.

Suddenly a bright flash gleamed through the darkness of the market-place; there was a sound like thunder, and a ball crashed through the wall of a house above Gauvain's head.

The barricade was answering cannon by cannon. What had happened? Something new. There was now artillery engaged on both sides.

A second cannon ball followed the first, and buried itself in the wall close to Gauvain's head, whilst a third took off his hat. They were all balls fired from a piece of heavy calibre; it was the sixteen-pounder that had come into action.

"They are aiming at you, Commandant," cried the gunners; and as they spoke they extinguished the torch.

Gauvain, still deep in thought, picked up his hat.

The marquis had reached the barricade from the opposite side.

Imânus ran up to him. "My lord," said he, "we have been surprised."

"By whom?"

"I do not know."

"Is the road to Dinân open?"

"I believe so."

"Then we must retire.

"They have already begun to do so; many have fled."

"They must not fly, but simply retire. Why did you not use the guns before?"

"They lost their heads; besides, the officers were absent."

"I have come now."

"My lord, I have sent on to Fougères all the baggage that I could, also the women, and all that might hamper our retreat. But what is to be done with the three little prisoners?"

"Ah, those children?"

"Yes."

"They are our hostages; they must be taken to La Tourge."

Having issued these orders, the marquis went to the barricade. With his arrival the whole aspect of matters changed. The barricade was not suitable to form a shelter for artillery, there were only embrasures for two guns. The marquis put into position two sixteen-pounders for which loopholes were constructed. As he bent over one of the guns watching the enemy, he perceived Gauvain.

"It is he," exclaimed the marquis. He then carefully loaded the piece himself, adjusted the sight, and took aim. Thrice he fired at Gauvain and missed; at the third shot he knocked his hat off.

"Awkward fellow that I am," muttered Lantenac, "a little lower, and I should have taken his head off."

All of a sudden the torch was extinguished, and there was only darkness in front of him.

"Good," said he.

Then turning to the peasant gunners, he exclaimed,—

"Now fire!"

Gauvain was not less in earnest on his part. The position became more serious. A new phase of the combat developed itself. The barricade had begun an artillery fire. Who could say if it might not change from the defensive to the offensive. Opposed to him he had, after deducting those who were killed, or had taken to flight, at least five thousand men,

whilst on his side he had only twelve hundred fit for action.

What would become of the republicans, if the enemy found out their diminished numbers? The positions were changed. He had been the assailant, and would now be the assailed. If those behind the barricade made a sortie all might be lost.

What was to be done? He could no longer think of attacking the barricade in front. An open attack would be rash in the extreme. Twelve hundred men could not hope to dislodge five thousand. To make a dash was out of the question. To wait would be fatal. It was necessary to make an end of the matter. But how to do it?

Gauvain belonged to these parts, and was well acquainted with the town. He knew that the old market place into which the Vendeans had retreated had in its rear a maze of narrow winding streets. He turned to his lieutenant, the courageous Guéchamp, who was afterwards famous for sweeping clean the Forest of Concise where Jean Chouan was born, and who by barring the passage of the dyke of La Chaîne, prevented the capture of Bourgneuf.

"Guéchamp!" said he, "I leave you in command. Keep up as rapid a fire as you can. Perforate the barricade with shot. Keep them busy over there."

"I understand," answered Guéchamp.

"Form in column with loaded muskets, and be prepared to charge," then he whispered a few words to him.

"I understand," said Guéchamp.

Gauvain continued, "Are all the drummers unhurt?"

"Yes."

"We have nine; keep two yourself, and give me seven."

The seven drummers came forward in silence, and formed up in front of Gauvain. Then he cried, "Regiment of the Red Cap to the front."

Twelve men, one of whom was a sergeant stepped out from the ranks of the main body.

"I called the whole regiment," said Gauvain.

"This is it," answered the sergeant.

"You are only twelve."

"Only twelve of us are left."

"It is well," said Gauvain.

The sergeant was the staunch rough Radoub who had in the name of the battalion adopted the three children that they had picked up in the wood of La Sandraie. It will be remembered that only half of the battalion had been massacred at Herbe en Pail, and Radoub was fortunate enough not to have been among the number.

A waggon of forage was standing close by, and Gauvain pointed to it. "Sergeant," said he, "tell your men to make some straw ropes, and fasten them round the muskets, so that there may be no clatter if they strike against each other.

A minute elapsed, and the order was silently executed in the darkness.

"It is done," said the sergeant.

"Soldiers, remove your shoes," ordered Gauvain.

"We have none," answered the sergeant.

Counting the seven drummers there were nineteen men, Gauvain himself was the twentieth. Then he exclaimed, "Form single rank, and follow me, the drummers behind me, the regiment to bring up the rear. Sergeant, you will command the battalion!" He placed himself at the head of the column, and whilst the cannonade on both sides continued, these twenty men, gliding like shadows, plunged into the network of narrow streets. They marched on like this for some time, winding about in front of the houses. All the town seemed dead, the inhabitants were hidden in their cellars. Every door was barred; not a shutter that was not securely fastened. No light anywhere.

In the main street, however, furious din still resounded; the artillery duel yet continued. The republican battery and the royalist barricade hurled their iron shower at each other with undiminished fury.

After twenty minutes of this tortuous march, Gauvain who seemed to find his way perfectly through the darkness, came to the extremity of a lane, which led into the main street, but on the other side of the market place.

The enemy's position was turned. On this side there was no entrenchment, as

always the imprudent custom of barricade builders; the market place was open, and they could freely enter under the pillars where several baggage waggons stood ready to make a start. Gauvain and his nineteen men had the five thousand Vendeans before them; but it was their backs, not their faces.

Gauvain spoke in a low voice to the sergeant, the twelve grenadiers untwisted the straw from their muskets, and posted themselves in lines behind the angle of the lane, and the seven drummers waited with their drumsticks raised in the air.

The discharges of artillery were intermittent. Suddenly, when there was a pause in the firing, Gauvain raised his sword, and shouted in a voice which rang like a trumpet call through the silence, "Two hundred men to the right, two hundred men to the left, the remainder in the centre!"

Twelve muskets were fired, and seven drums sounded the charge.

Gauvain shouted the well-known war cry of the *Blues*, "The bayonet only, down with them!"

The effect was wonderful. The whole mass of peasants believed that they were taken in the rear, and that a fresh army was at their backs. At the same moment on hearing the drums, the column under Guéchamp's command at the head of the street began to advance, sounding the charge, and moved forward at a run on the barricade. The peasants thus found themselves taken between two fires. Panic magnifies everything; a pistol shot sounds like the report of a cannon, and the barking of a dog like the roaring of a lion. Add to this that the peasant takes fright as easily as the thatch catches fire and as quickly as a blazing thatch becomes conflagration, so a panic among peasants becomes a rout. There was a wild and headlong flight.

In a few moments the market place was empty, the frightened peasants fled in every direction. Their officers could not restrain them.

Imânus uselessly killed two or three of the fugitives. The cry of "*Save himself who can*," rose up above all other sounds, and the army passed through the streets of the town like water through the apertures of a sieve, and dispersed into the open country with the rapidity of a cloud carried away by a hurricane.

Some fled towards Chateauneuf, some towards Plerguer, others in the direction of Antrain. The Marquis de Lantenac watched the flight. He spiked the guns with his own hands, and then retreated slowly and calmly, muttering to himself, "Certainly, these peasants will not stand, we must have the English."

CHAPTER IV.

IT IS THE SECOND TIME.

It was a complete victory. Gauvain turned to the men of the Red Cap Regiment and remarked, "There are only twelve of you, but you are equal to a thousand." In those times a word of praise from his commandant was as precious to the soldier as the cross of honour.

Guéchamp, dispatched by Gauvain in pursuit of the fugitives, took a number of prisoners. The town was searched by torchlight. All who could not contrive to make their escape were captured. The main street was illuminated with fire pots. It was strewn with the dead and dying. After a battle some last spark of resistance still lingers, and here and there they yet made a stand, but when surrounded, they threw down their arms.

Gauvain had noticed amidst the hurry of the retreat a brave fellow, strong and agile as a fawn, who, without flying himself, had endeavoured to cover the flight of the others. The man had used his weapon with the greatest energy, shooting with the barrel and knocking down with the butt, so much so that at last he had broken it. Now he had a pistol in one hand and a sabre in the other, and was standing at bay, no one daring to approach him. All at once Gauvain saw that he staggered and leaned back against the wall.

The man had been wounded, but he still grasped his sword and pistol. Gauvain put his sword under his arm, and went straight up to him.

"Surrender," said he.

The man looked at him steadily, under

his clothes the blood was flowing fast, and making a pool about his feet.

"You are my prisoner," continued Gauvain.

The man remained silent.

"What is your name?"

"I am called the Dancer in the Shade."

"You are a brave fellow," said Gauvain, and he held out his hand.

The man gave a feeble shout of "Long live the King," and then collecting all the force that remained to him, he raised both his arms; he fired his pistol straight at Gauvain's heart, and made a cut at his head with his sabre. He made this attack with the promptitude and the ferocity of a tiger; but some one acted still more promptly. It was the horseman whom we have met before, who had at that instant arrived on the scene, and to whom no one had paid any attention.

He saw the Vendéan raise his sabre and pistol, and threw himself between him and Gauvain. Without this, Gauvain would have been a dead man. The horse received the pistol bullet, and the man the sabre cut. Both fell to the ground. All this was the work of an instant.

The Vendéan on his side had sunk down upon the pavement.

The sabre cut had struck the horseman full in the face, and hurled him senseless to the ground; the horse was killed.

Gauvain drew near him, "Who is this man?" asked he.

They examined him; the blood from the wound inundated his face, and made him appear to have on a red mask; it was impossible to recognise a single feature, but they could see that he had grey hair.

"That man has saved my life," said Gauvain. "Does any one here know him?"

"Commandant," said one of the soldiers, "I saw the man come into the town just now; he arrived by the road from Pontorson."

The surgeon-major of the column had hurried up with his case of instruments. The wounded man was still unconscious; the surgeon stooped over him and examined the wound. "It is a clean cut," said he, "and will soon heal; in eight days he will be walking about again; it is a splendid sabre stroke." The wounded man was wrapped in a cloak, and wore a tricoloured sash, a sword, and pistols. They laid him on a litter, and brought a bucket of cold water. The surgeon washed the wound, and the face began to appear. Gauvain looked at him with the deepest interest.

"Were any papers found on him?" asked he.

The surgeon tapped his pockets, and drew out a pocket-book from one, which he handed to Gauvain.

Refreshed by the application of cold water, the wounded man began to come to himself again, and his eyes half opened.

Gauvain searched the pocket book, and found a piece of paper folded in four, he opened it and read, "Committee of Public Safety, the Citizen Cimourdain. . . ."

He uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Cimourdain!"

His cry made the wounded man open his eyes.

Gauvain was thunderstruck.

"What, Cimourdain, is it you? that is the second time that you have saved my life!"

Cimourdain looked steadily at Gauvain, an ineffable ray of joy illuminated his blood-stained visage. Gauvain fell upon his knees by the side of the wounded man, exclaiming "My master."

"Say rather, your father," murmured Cimourdain faintly.

CHAPTER V.

A DROP OF COLD WATER.

THEY had not met for many years; but their hearts had never been absent one from the other, and they recognised each other as though they had only last met the evening before. A hospital had been extemporised in the Town Hall of Dol, and they laid Cimourdain on a bed in a little chamber adjoining the large room in which all the wounded had been placed. The surgeon had sewn up the cut, and had ordered all exciting conversation between the two men to cease, as it was best that Cimourdain should be allowed to sleep. Besides, the thousand cares and duties of victory claimed Gauvain's

time and attention. Cimourdain remained alone, but he did not sleep, he was tormented with two fevers,—the fever of his wound, and the fever of his joy. He did not sleep, and yet he did not seem to be awake. Could it be possible? was his dream realised? Cimourdain was not one of those who believed in a lucky cast of the dice in the game of life, and yet he had made it. He had found Gauvain once more. He had quitted him a child, and found him now a grown-up man. He found him powerful, intrepid, and valiant. He found him a conqueror, and what is more, a conqueror in the cause of the people. Gauvain was the main support of the Revolutionary cause in La Vendée, and it was he, Cimourdain, who had fashioned this pillar of the Republic.

This triumphant general was his pupil. The expression that gleamed across that face, rescued perhaps for a place in the Republican Pantheon had been inspired by his thoughts and teaching. His disciple, this child of his soul, was already a hero, and would no doubt become a future glory to him. It appeared to Cimourdain that he was looking upon his own soul regenerated by his genius. He had with his own eyes seen how Gauvain made war. It was like Chiron the Centaur watching the prowess of Achilles. There was a strange resemblance between the priest and the Centaur, for the priest, too, is but half a man. All the strange events of this chance meeting, mingled with the sleeplessness caused by his wound, filled Cimourdain's brain with a mysterious feeling of intoxication. A new star of destiny was rising, which promised to become a magnificent constellation, and what was more, the power to direct that star was in his hands. Another success like that of to-day, and a word from Cimourdain to the Republic would give to Gauvain the command of an army. Nothing dazzles like the surprise of unexpected success. This was a time when everyone was filled with dreams of military glory. Every one wished to be a successful general. Danton wished to appoint Westermann to the chief command; Marat, Rossignol; Hébert, Rousin; whilst Robespierre wished to get rid of all of them. "Why should not the post be given to Gauvain?" said Cimourdain to himself, as he dreamed over the matter. The illimitable was before him; he passed from one supposition to another. All obstacles vanished away from his path; once let him put his foot on the ladder, and he would not stop there. In the ascent of the Infinite, one starts from earth, and gains the stars.

A great general is but the director of armies, a great captain is the director of ideas. Cimourdain dreamed of Gauvain as a great captain. It seemed, for his thoughts flew fast, that he could see Gauvain on the seas, and the English flying before him; on the Rhine curbing the insolence of the Kings of the North; on the Pyrenees thrusting back Spain; on the Alps, making a signal to Rome to arouse from its slumber. In Cimourdain were combined the two dispositions, tenderness and sternness, and this day had satisfied both of them, for he had seen Gauvain victorious, and he had seen him terrible in action. Cimourdain thought of all that it would be necessary to destroy, before he could commence to build up; "And certainly," said he to himself, "this is not the time for mawkish sentimentality; Gauvain 'will be up to the mark'"—a common expression at that time. Cimourdain pictured to himself Gauvain crushing down with his foot the dark shadow of prejudice; clad in armour of light, with the vivid fire of a meteor flaming in his forehead, spreading wide the ideal wings of justice, reason, and progress; a sword in his hand; an angel, but a destroying one.

At the height of his reverie which was almost an ecstatic delirium, he heard, through the half-opened door, voices in the large room of the hospital adjoining his chamber. He recognised Gauvain's voice—that voice, which, in spite of years of separation, was still so familiar to his ear; and in the tones of the man he could recognise the accents of the child. He listened. There was a sound of footsteps; some soldiers were speaking.

"Commandant, here is the man who fired on you; whilst no one was looking he crawled into a cellar, but we found him, and here he is."

Then Cimourdain heard the following dialogue between Gauvain and the prisoner.

"You are wounded?"

"I am well enough to be shot."

"Put this man to bed; let his wound be looked to; take care of him, and cure him."

"I wish to die."

"You shall live. You wished to kill me in the name of the King; I grant you pardon in the name of the Republic."

A dark shadow passed over Cimourdain's features, a convulsive shudder passed through his frame, and he murmured with a kind of sinister dejection, "What! Is he one of the merciful?"

CHAPTER VI.

A WOUNDED BOSOM, A BLEEDING HEART.

A SWORD-CUT soon heals, but there was some one who had been more seriously wounded than Cimourdain; this was the woman who had been shot by the order of the Marquis de Lantenac, and who had been picked out of the great pool of blood at the farm of Herbe en Pail, by Tellmarch the beggar.

Michelle Fléchard was more seriously injured than Tellmarch had at first imagined.

There was a bullet-hole in the shoulder-blade corresponding to the one in her breast, and whilst one ball had broken the collar-bone, another had pierced her shoulder; but as her lungs were uninjured, there was still a chance of her recovery. Tellmarch was "a philosopher,"—a word in vogue amongst the peasants, which means an amateur doctor, a mixture of the surgeon and the wizard. He bore the wounded woman away to his forest-home, and laid her on his bed of dry seaweed and treated her with those mysterious medicaments termed "simples," and thanks to him she recovered. The collar-bone joined, the wounds in the breast and neck closed, and after a few weeks she became convalescent. One morning she was able to crawl out of the hiding-place, and leaning on Tellmarch's arm, seat herself at the foot of the tree in the sunshine. Tellmarch knew nothing of her history; a wound in the breast prevents much talking; and during the almost death-agony that had preceded the cure, she had hardly uttered a word.

When she would have spoken, Tellmarch urged her to keep silence; but recollection remained to her, and Tellmarch could read in her eyes that she was tortured by all kinds of agonising thoughts.

This morning, however, she was stronger, and could almost walk without help. When you have cured a person you feel a paternal instinct rise in you towards your patient, and Tellmarch was happy as he looked at her. With a smile the good old man said,

"Well, we are able to get up at last, and the wound is healed."

"Not the one in my heart," answered she; then she continued, "You do not know where they are?"

"Where who are?" asked Tellmarch.

"My children."

Her words expressed a perfect flood of thoughts; they meant, "Since you say nothing to me, since after so many days you have been with me without opening your mouth, since you have ordered me to be silent each time that I endeavoured to speak, since you seemed to fear to tell me anything, it is because you have no information to give me." Often in her fits of delirium she had asked for her children, and she had seen, for delirium has its lucid moments, that the old man made no reply.

The fact is, that Tellmarch did not know what to say. It is not easy to answer a mother who has lost her children, and besides, he knew nothing, absolutely nothing. He knew that the mother had been shot, and that she had been picked up by him half-dead, and that this half-dead woman had had three children, and that after having ordered the mother to be shot, the Marquis de Lantenac had carried off the children. But there all his information ended. What had become of these children? Were they even still living? He knew that there were, so he had been told, two boys, and a little girl only just weaned; but nothing more. He had put a number of questions to the unhappy group around her, but could elicit no response. Peasants are full of suspicion, they were not very fond of Tellmarch.

Tellmarch the beggar was a man that they could not understand; why was he always gazing at the heavens? what did he do? And how did he pass his long hours of motionless contemplation?

He was certainly a strange creature; besides the Marquis of Lantenac was not a man of whom they would willingly talk much, so they contented themselves with shaking their heads when he interrogated them. In this part of the country given over to all the horrors of war which was slaying on all sides, where man had but one object, destruction, and one duty, massacre; where the only thought was to murder a family, cut off an outpost, sack a village, or to lay ambuscades and draw the enemy into traps, and do the most mischief that they could to each other; this man of a solitary life who was as much absorbed in the beauties of nature as he had been in times of peace, who plucked herbs and plants, and was only occupied with his birds, his flowers, and the stars, must evidently be a dangerous man. Apparently he had not all his wits, for he never concealed himself behind a bush, and never fired shots at anyone, so that a certain mystery hung around him.

"The man is mad," said the passers-by.

Tellmarch was, therefore, more than a solitary man; he was a man that was avoided.

They put no questions to him, and hardly made any replies to him. He had not, therefore, been able to obtain the information that he required. The tide of war had flowed in another direction, and the fighting was at a greater distance now; the Marquis de Lantenac had disappeared on the horizon; and from Tellmarch's disposition, for him, to feel the war, it must set its iron heel upon him. After these words "*My children*" the smile had vanished from Tellmarch's face, and the mother had relapsed into her reverie. What was passing in her heart? She seemed to be at the bottom of an abyss. All of a sudden she again fixed her eyes upon Tellmarch, and in a voice in which there was almost an angry intonation, she again cried out, "*My children!*"

Tellmarch bent his head like a guilty man.

He thought of the Marquis de Lantenac, who certainly was not thinking of him, and who probably hardly knew that he even existed. He murmured to himself,—"A lord when he is in danger knows you, but, when he is out of it, he thinks of you no longer." Then he asked himself, "Why did I save that nobleman?"

And he answered the question, "Because he was a man." He remained buried in sad thoughts, and then continued, "Am I sure of that?"

Then he repeated his bitter speech,—"If I had only known!"

The whole event puzzled him, for in all that he had done, he saw a species of riddle that he was unable to solve. He meditated over it in the deepest melancholy. An action done with the best intent may lead to evil results. He who saves the wolf, endangers the sheep. He who mends a vulture's wings is responsible for the work of its talons. He really felt that he had been guilty, and that the unconscious anger of the woman was just and reasonable.

But still the thought of having preserved the woman consoled him for having saved the marquis.

But the children?

The mother was also deep in thought; those two reveries marching side by side, and without communicating with each other, met perhaps in the dark region of Thought.

Upon her brow was the gloom of night; she fixed her eyes upon Tellmarch, and said, "But matters cannot be allowed to pass like this."

"Hush," said Tellmarch, and he placed his finger on his lips; but she continued, "You were wrong to save my life. I would rather have been dead, because then I am sure that I should have seen them; I should have known where they were. They would not have seen me, but I should have been near them. A dead woman would have been a protection to them."

He took her hand, and felt her pulse. "Calm yourself," said he, "or you will have a fresh attack of fever."

She asked him harshly, "When shall I be able to go?"

"To go?"

"Yes, to walk."

"Never, if you are not reasonable; to-morrow, if you act sensibly."

"What do you call acting sensibly?"

"Having confidence in God."

"What has God done with my children?"

Her mind seemed wandering, but her voice assumed a more gentle tone, as she continued, "You understand that I cannot remain like this. You have never had any children as I have. That makes all the difference. One cannot judge of a thing that one does not understand. You have never had any children, have you?"

"No," answered Tellmarch.

"They were my all; without my children, what am I? I want some one to explain to me why I have not my children. I feel that something has passed that I cannot understand. They killed my husband, they shot him; but all the same I do not understand why."

"There, there," said Tellmarch, "the fever is coming on again; do not talk any more."

She looked at him, and remained silent. From that day she never opened her lips. She passed away the time seated at the foot of the tree in a state of stupor. She meditated in silence. Silence offers an inaccessible refuge for simple souls that have sunk to the lowest depth of misfortune. She seemed to have renounced all hopes of comprehending matters. Despair is unintelligible to the despairing.

Tellmarch much moved, watched her anxiously. In the presence of this suffering the old man felt with a woman's feelings. "Oh, yes," he said to himself, "her lips do not move, but her eyes speak. I know well what is the matter, what her single idea is. To have been a mother, and to be no more one; to have nursed her children, and no longer to have them to nurse. She cannot accustom herself to it. She is thinking of the youngest of all, that hung on her breast a few short days ago; she thinks, and thinks, and thinks. It must be so delicious to feel a little rosy mouth drawing your very soul from you, and to know that your life is giving life to your child." He paused, understanding well the powerlessness of words before such desolation. The silence arising from a fixed idea is terrible; and how can one reason with a mother's fixed idea. Maternity is beyond argument, and there is no discussion possible with it. What renders a mother so sublime is, that she is a species of animal. The maternal instinct is divinely animal. Woman is no longer human, she is simply feminine.

Children are her young; hence in the mother there is a something at once above and below argument. A mother has an instinct. All the gigantic, mysterious will of creation is within her and guides her. Hers is a blindness lightened by supernatural power.

Tellmarch now wished to make this unfortunate creature speak, but it was in vain. One day he said to her, "I am old, and cannot walk far; I come sooner to the end of my strength than the end of my road. After a quarter of an hour's walking my legs refuse to carry me, and I have to stop and rest; were it not for that I would go with you in your search for your children. Perhaps, however, it is best that I cannot do so, as I should be more dangerous than useful to you. I am tolerated in this neighbourhood, but the *Blues* suspect me because I am a peasant, and the peasants distrust me because they say that I am a wizard."

He waited for her answer, but she did not even raise her eyes. A fixed idea ends either in madness or in heroism. But of what act of heroism is a poor peasant woman capable? Of none. She can be a mother, and that is all. Each day she seemed more and more buried in her thoughts. Tellmarch watched her carefully. He tried to find means of occupation for her, a thimble, needles and thread, and to his delight she began to sew. She still seemed in the land of dreams, but she worked, which was a sign of returning health; she mended his linen, his clothes, and his shoes; but her eyes still remained glazed. All the time that she was sewing she sang meaningless songs in a low voice. She murmured some names, probably those of her children, but not sufficiently distinctly for Tellmarch to make them out. She interrupted herself, and listened to the birds, as if they could give her the news her heart longed for. She looked at the weather. Her lips

quivered, she was speaking to herself in an undertone. She made a bag, and filled it with chestnuts. One day Tellmarch saw her preparing to set forth, her eyes fixed on the depths of the wood. "Where are you going?" asked he.

"I am going to look for them," answered she.

He made no effort to detain her.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EXTREMES OF THE TRUTH.

THE past few weeks had been filled with the news of the war. All rumour in the district of Fougères had reference to the two men who were in open opposition to each other, and were yet occupied in the same work; that is, fighting side by side the great battle of the Revolution.

The Vendéan duel continued in all its inveteracy, but La Vendée was being driven backwards. In Ile-et-Vilaine, for instance, thanks to the young commander who at Dol had so promptly responded to the audacity of six thousand Royalists, with fifteen hundred Patriots, the insurrection, if not crushed, was at least much lessened and circumscribed. Many more successes had succeeded this one, and from continued successes a new position of affairs had arrived.

Things had changed in outward appearance, but a singular complication had arisen. In all this district of La Vendée, the Republic had the superiority, there could be no doubt about this,—but which was the Republic? In the glorious future that was opening out, there were two Republics,—the republic of terror, and the republic of mercy. One desired to overcome by severity, and the other by clemency. Which of the two would prevail? These two opposite agencies were represented by two men, holding conciliatory and implacable ideas, one holding a military command, and the other the position of a civil delegate. Of these two men, the civil delegate had the strongest points of support; he had come to the seat of war as the bearer of the menacing order to the division of Santerre—"*No mercy, no quarter.*" The special decrees of the Convention had given him unlimited power,—"The penalty of death against any one, who should release, or favour the release of, any rebel leader," and also full power emanating from the Committee of Public Safety, together with an injunction commanding implicit obedience to him, signed by ROBESPIERRE, DANTON, AND MARAT. The military official had, on his side, no orders, only the pity emanating from his own heart. He had only his own strong right arm with which he defeated his country's enemies, and his noble heart which granted them mercy. A conqueror, he felt that he had the right to spare the conquered. Hence arose a deep but hidden strife between these two men; they both moved in a different groove; each was unanimous in opposing the rebellion, but the weapon of the one was—victory, that of the other—terror.

Every one in the Bocage spoke of them, and what added to the interest with which all eyes were fixed upon them was, that these men, acting with such different feelings, were yet firmly united to each other. The two antagonists were the closest friends. Never had deeper or more profound sympathy drawn two hearts together. The stern man had saved the life of the merciful one, and bore on his face the scar of the wound that he had received in doing so. These two men were the incarnation of Life and Death; one was the emblem of terror, the other of clemency,—and yet they loved each other. A strange problem. As though Orestes was merciful, and Pylades cruel, as though Arimanes was the brother of Ormus.

Let it be said that the one called "the severe," was the most fraternal of men; he bound up the wounds of the injured, nursed the sick, and passed days and nights by the sides of the ambulances, and in the hospitals; melted at the sight of the barefooted children; kept nothing for himself, but gave it all to the poor. When there was fighting he marched at the head of the columns, armed, for he wore sword and pistols; unarmed, for no one had ever seen him draw his sabre, or make use of his pistols. He braved blows, but never gave any. People said that he had been a priest.

One of these men was Gauvain, the other Cimourdain.

There was a bond of friendship between the two men, but disagreement between their principles. It was like one soul cut in twain. Gauvain had received half of that of Cimourdain—the gentle half. It seemed as if Gauvain's heart was illuminated by a brilliant ray of light, and Cimourdain's by a flash of lurid fire. Hence there was discord in their intimacy. This half-stifled war must eventually burst forth. One day the battle commenced.

"What point have we reached?" said Cimourdain to Gauvain.

"You know as well as I do," answered Gauvain. "I have scattered the forces of Lantenac; he has only a few men with him now. He has been driven into the Forest of Fougères. In eight days he will be surrounded."

"And in fifteen days?"

"He will be taken."

"And then?"

"You have read my proclamation?"

"I have; well?"

"He will be shot."

"Mere clemency; he should be guillotined."

"For my part," said Gauvain, "I think that a military death would be the best."

"And I," retorted Cimourdain, "a revolutionary one." He gazed steadily into Gauvain's face, and continued, "Why did you set at liberty the nuns of the Convent of Saint Marc le Blanc?"

"I do not make war on women," answered Gauvain.

"Those women hate the people, and a woman's hatred is more dangerous than that of ten men. Why did you decline to send before the revolutionary tribunal that herd of old fanatical priests that were taken at Louvigné?"

"I do not make war on old men."

"An old priest is worse than a young one. Rebellion is more dangerous when the preacher of it has white hair. People put faith in wrinkles. Let us have no misplaced pity, Gauvain. The regicides were the true liberators of their country. Keep your eyes fixed upon the turrets of the Temple."

"The turrets of the Temple indeed! I would let the Dauphin go free. I do not make war on children." Cimourdain's face grew hard.

"Gauvain, learn that you must make war on a woman even if she is called Marie Antoinette; on an old man, when he is called Pope Pius VI.; and on a child, when he is called Louis Capet."

"Master, I am not a man versed in politics."

"Try and not be a dangerous man. Why, at the attack on the post of Cossé, when the rebel, Jean Treton, surrounded and lost, rushed alone, sword in hand, against all your columns, did you cry out, '*Open the ranks, and let him pass*'?"

"Because you do not want fifteen hundred men to kill one."

"Why, at La Cailleterie d'Astillé, when you saw that your men were going to kill the Vendéan Joseph Bézier, who was wounded, and dragging himself along with difficulty, did you cry out '*Go on, this is my affair!*' and then fire your pistol in the air?"

"Because we do not kill a man on the ground."

"And you were wrong; to-day both of them are leaders of bands, Joseph Bézier is Moustache; and Jean Treton is Jambe d'Argent. In saving the lives of these two men you spared two enemies to the Republic.

"Certainly, I wished to make her friends, not to give her enemies."

"Why, after the victory of Landéan, did you not have your three hundred peasant prisoners shot?"

"Because Bonchamp had shown mercy to the Republican prisoners, and I wished it to be said that the Republic had spared the lives of the Royalists."

"Then, if you take Lantenac prisoner, you will spare his life?"

"No."

"Why not, since you showed mercy to three hundred peasants?"

"Peasants are ignorant people, Lantenac knows what he is doing."

"But Lantenac is your relative."

"France is the nearest relative of us all."

"Lantenac is an old man."

"Lantenac is a foreigner, Lantenac has no age, Lantenac would call in the English, Lantenac means invasion, Lantenac is the

enemy of his country. The duel between us can only be ended by death,—his or mine."

"Gauvain, keep that speech in your memory."

"Once spoken, I shall do so."

There was a slight pause and they looked at each other steadily, then Gauvain continued, "This year of '93 in which we now are will be long remembered as a blood-stained epoch."

"Take care!" cried Cimourdain. "Terrible duties exist. Do not accuse what is beyond the reach of accusation. Since when has disease been the fault of the physician? Yes, the principal characteristic of this stupendous era is that it is pitiless. Why so? Because it is the grand revolutionary year. This year, in which we now are, incarnated the Revolution. The Revolution has one enemy,—the old world, and it is without pity for it; just as the surgeon has one enemy, gangrene, and shows it no mercy. The Revolution extirpates Royalty in the King, aristocracy in the noble, despotism in the soldier, superstition in the priest, barbarity in the judge; in a word, does away with tyranny and the tyrant. The operation is a terrible one, but the Revolution executes it with a sure hand. As to the quantity of healthy flesh that is sacrificed during the operation ask Bœrhaave what he thinks of the matter. You cannot cut out a tumour and spill no blood. These stern necessities are the very conditions of success. A surgeon resembles a butcher; a healer may be like an executioner. The Revolution devotes itself to the accomplishment of its fatal work. It mutilates, but yet it saves. You ask for pity to be shown to the venom? you wish that mercy should be exhibited to the poison? The Republic will not listen to you. It holds the post and it will carry out its duties. It inflicts a deep wound on civilisation, but from it will arise health to the whole human race. You suffer during the operation doubtless. How long will it last? It will last the time necessary for the operation. After that you will be cured. The Revolution amputates the world, hence the inward bleeding of '93."

"But a surgeon is calm," said Gauvain, "and the men that I see are violent."

"The Revolution," answered Cimourdain, "requires rough workmen. She casts aside every hand that trembles; she only puts faith in the inexorable. Danton is the terrible, Robespierre the inflexible, Saint Just is the immovable, Marat is the unrelenting. Take care, Gauvain; such names are necessary. They will terrify Europe."

"And perhaps futurity also," said Gauvain; then he paused and continued, "In this matter, master, you err. I do not accuse anyone; according to me, the true point upon which to look at the Revolution is its irresponsibility. No man is innocent, and no one is guilty. Louis XVI. was a sheep thrown amongst lions. He wished to escape, to save himself; he endeavoured to defend himself; he would have bitten had he been able. But every one cannot be a lion. His very folly is looked upon as a crime. Filled with rage, the sheep tries to show his teeth. '*The Traitor!*' cry the lions, then they eat him, and afterwards begin to fight among themselves."

"The sheep is a mere brute."

"And the lions, what are they?"

This answer made Cimourdain think for a moment; then he lifted up his head, and answered, "Lions are consciences, lions are ideas, lions are principles."

"They created the Terror."

"One day the Revolution will be the justification of the Terror."

"Fear rather that the Terror will become the Libel of the Revolution! Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, these are the dogmas of peace and harmony. Why give them a hideous aspect? What is our object? To win people to a universal republic? Well, do not let us frighten them. What good is there in causing them alarm? The people are not attracted by a scarecrow any more than the birds. We must not do evil that good may come of it. We do not overthrow the throne to raise up the scaffold. Death to kings, but life to nations. Cast down the crowns, but spare the heads. Revolution is concord, not terror. Gentle policy cannot be carried out by men of harsh ideas. Mercy is the most beautiful word in the human language. I only wish to spill blood when I risk my own in doing so. After all, I

only know how to fight, my trade is that of a soldier. But if we cannot be merciful it takes away all the pleasure of being victorious. Let us be in battle the enemy of our opponent, and in victory their brothers."

"Take care!" repeated Cimourdain for the third time. "Take care, Gauvain, you are more to me than a son." Then in a melancholy voice he added, "In these times, clemency may be another form of treason."

To hear these two men conversing was like listening to a dialogue between a sword and an axe.

CHAPTER VIII.

MATER DOLOROSA.

MEANWHILE the mother was in search of her children. She went on straight in front. How did she continue to exist? It was impossible to say. She herself did not know. She walked on night and day, she begged, she fed on herbs, she lay on the bare earth, she slept in the open air, sometimes crouched in the brushwood, sometimes under the stars, sometimes exposed to wind and rain. She wandered from village to village, and from farm to farm, trying to gather information. She stopped on the threshold of the cottages. Her dress was all tattered and torn. Sometimes the peasants were kind to her, sometimes they drove her away. When they would not receive her in their houses she took refuge in the woods. She did not know the country, she was ignorant of every part, except Siscoignard and the parish of Azé; she had no fixed route, she often turned round, and retraversed ground that she had before gone over, giving herself useless trouble. She walked sometimes along the main roads, sometimes through the lanes cut up by deep ruts from the cart-wheels, sometimes through the paths in the woods. In all her purposeless wanderings she had worn out her miserable clothes. First she had had shoes, but when these were worn out she walked bare-footed, her feet too often torn and bleeding. She passed through the places where fighting was going on, through the hail of bullets, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, endeavouring to avoid nothing, only seeking for her children. All was in disorder, there were no constables, no magistrates, no one in authority. She could only glean information from chance passers-by. She spoke to everyone and asked.

"Have you seen three little children anywhere?" The peasant would look up and she would go on, "Two boys, and a girl. René-Jean, Gros-Alain, and Georgette." Then she would add, "The eldest was four-and-a-half years old, the youngest twenty months, do you know where they are? they have taken them from me."

They stared at her, but that was all. Seeing that they did not understand her, she said,

"These are mine, do you see; that is why I am looking for them."

The peasants went on their way; then she would stop, and would silently press her nails into her flesh. One day, however, a peasant listened to what she said. The man began to reflect.

"Wait now," said he; "three children?"

"Yes."

"Two boys?"

"And a girl."

"You are searching for them?"

"Yes."

"I heard some talk about a lord having taken away three little children which he had with him."

"Where is the man?" cried she. "Where are they?"

"At La Tourgue," answered the man.

"Shall I find my children there?"

"Perhaps there is a chance of so doing."

"What is La Tourgue?"

"It is a place."

"Is it a village, a castle, or a farm?"

"I have never been there."

"Is it far off?"

"It is not near."

"In which direction?"

"Towards Fougères."

"Which is the road to it?"

"You are at Ventortes now," answered the peasant. "You must leave Ernée on the left, and Coxelles on the right; you will

pass Lorchamps, and cross the Leroux;" and, raising his hand, the man pointed to the west. "Go on, keep straight ahead to where the sun sets."

Before his arm had again fallen to his side, she had started off. The man called after her. "But take care of yourself, for they are fighting there."

She never turned round to answer him, but continued her route.

CHAPTER IX.

LA TOURGUE.

FORTY years back the traveller who entered the Forest of Fougères, by the side of Laignelet, and left it by Parigné, was met on the borders of the grand old wood by a sinister object. As he emerged from the copses, La Tourgue rose abruptly before him. Not the living La Tourgue, but the dead one. The cracked, battered, seamed, and dismantled La Tourgue. An edifice in ruins is as much its ghost, as a spectre is of a man. No more melancholy vision could strike the eye than La Tourgue presented. What was offered to the eye of the traveller was a lofty circular tower, standing alone at a corner of the wood like a criminal. The tower, placed on a perpendicular rock, was so hard-looking and solid, that it resembled a bit of Roman architecture, and the frowning mass gave an idea of strength even amidst its ruin. It was to a certain extent Roman, since it was Romanic. Commenced in the ninth century, it had been completed in the twelfth, after the third crusade. The ornamented work showed its age pretty clearly. On ascending the rock upon which it was situated, a large breach in the wall became visible. On entering it, you found yourself in the tower which was quite empty, and looked like the inside of a huge stone trumpet set upright in the ground. There were no ceilings or partitions the whole way up, there were the empty spaces from which the arches and fireplaces had been torn away, and at different heights stone brackets and transverse beams showed the spots where the floors of the different storys had been; these beams were covered with the droppings of night birds. The walls were fifteen feet thick at the base, and twelve at the top; here and there were holes and apertures where doors had formerly existed, and through which dim glimpses of staircases in the thickness of the wall could be seen. The traveller passing by there in the evening could hear the hooting of the forest owl, and the cry of the Brittany heron; beneath his feet were stones, brambles, and reptiles, and above his head, through a black circle which looked like the mouth of some gigantic well, a glimpse could be caught of the stars. In the neighbourhood there was a tradition that, in the upper story of the tower, there were secret doors, made, like the doors of the tombs of the kings of Judah, of large stones turning on pivots, opening and then shutting, and forming a part of the wall,—an architectural trick brought over by the Crusaders together with the Saracenic arch. When these doors were closed it was impossible to discover them, so exactly did they resemble the rest of the wall. Similar doors can now be seen in the mysterious cities of Anti-Liban, which escaped the fate of the twelve cities destroyed by an earthquake under Tiberius

CHAPTER X.

THE BREACH.

THE breach by which an entrance could be effected into the ruin was the work of a mine. For a person acquainted with Errard, Sardi, and Pagan, this mine had been skilfully constructed. The receptacle for the powder had been made in the shape of a bishop's mitre, and was in size proportionate to the tower which it was to destroy. It must have contained at least two hundred-weight of powder. The hole through which powder was reached was serpentine, which is more efficacious than a straight one. The destruction caused by the springing of the mine had left the saucisson bare, which was of the proper diameter, namely, of a hen's egg.

The explosion had made a deep fissure in the wall, by which the besiegers had gained an entrance. The tower had evidently at different times been besieged in

due form. It was riddled with bullets, and these bullets were of different epochs. Each ball has its own way of marking a wall, and each had left its scar upon the tower, from the stone balls of the twelfth century, to the iron ones of the eighteenth. Through the breach you entered upon what had been originally the ground floor. In the wall of the tower directly facing the breach, there was the entrance to a crypt, excavated out of the solid rock, and extending under the whole of the tower.

This crypt, which was about three parts filled up, was cleared out in 1835, under the superintendence of M. Auguste Le Prevost, antiquary of Bernay.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OUBLIETTE.

This crypt was the oubliette. Every feudal castle had one. This crypt, like many of the dungeon cells of that period, had an upper and a lower floor. The upper floor, which was entered by the gateway, was a large vaulted chamber, on a level with the ground floor. On the partition walls could be seen two parallel and two vertical furrows, stretching from one side of the chamber to the other, and in which they had left deep ruts like the tracks of wheels. They were such, in fact. These two furrows had been hollowed out by two wheels. In former days it was in this chamber that the punishment of quartering was carried on in a less noisy way than when performed by four horses. There were two strong wheels, so tall that they reached the roof, to each of these wheels the arm and leg of the victim was bound, and when the wheels were turned reverse ways the man was torn in pieces, This required a certain amount of force, hence the ruts hollowed out of the stone by the wheels as they grated against it. A similar room can be seen now at Vianden. Below this chamber was another, a regular oubliette. There was no door to this, the entrance was through a hole. The victim, entirely denuded of clothing, was let down by a cord under his armpits into the lower chamber through a sort of loophole cut out of the pavement of the upper chamber. If he was obstinate enough to persist in living, they threw his food to him through this hole. A hole of this kind can still be seen at Boulilon. Through this hole air came. The lower room hollowed out beneath the ground floor, was more a well than a dungeon; its floor was covered with water, and an icy blast swept through it. This wind which caused the prisoner beneath to perish, gave life to the one above, as it rendered the atmosphere of the upper cell fit to be breathed. The prisoner above groping about only got his air through this hole. Anyone who once entered or fell into the lower one, never came out again alive. It was for the prisoner to look out that he did not fall in. A single false step might change him from a prisoner in the upper, to a prisoner in the lower dungeon. That was his business. If he had a desire for life, this hole was a source of danger; if he wished to be rid of it, this hole was a means of doing so. The upper floor was the dungeon, the lower the tomb. This was emblematical of Society at that period.

It was what was termed by our ancestors, "*A depth beneath the moat.*" The actual thing has disappeared, and the name has now no meaning for us. Thanks to the work of the Revolution, we can now hear such names spoken with indifference.

Outside the tower, above the breach, which forty years ago was the only means of entrance, was an opening in the wall larger than the other loopholes, from which hung an iron grating, bent, and out of order.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CASTLE AND THE BRIDGE.

From the tower, on the opposite side to where the breach was, sprang a stone bridge, with three slightly damaged arches. This bridge had formerly been covered in by a building of which some fragments still remain. It had evidently been destroyed by fire, and only some few portions of the framework were left,—a sort of blackened skeleton, through which the light passed, looking like a figure of death beside a

phantom. This ruin is now utterly demolished, and not a trace of it remains. That which it took many years and the reigns of many kings to erect, was destroyed in one day by a single peasant. La Tourgue, in the peasant dialect, is an abbreviation which means Tour Gauvain, as La Jupelle stands for La Jupellière, and Pinson le Tort, the nickname of a hunch-backed leader, is put for Pinson le Tortu.

La Tourgue, which forty years ago was a ruin, and is to-day but a recollection, was in 1793 a strong fortress. It was the old stronghold of the Gauvains, which guarded the western side of the Forest of Fougères—a forest which is now hardly worthy of the name of a wood.

This citadel had been built on one of those huge masses of slate rock which abound between Mayenne and Dinan, and which are scattered about everywhere among the thickets and brushwood, as though the Titans had hurled them at each other in warfare. The tower was the centre fortress, beneath the tower was the rock, at the foot of the rock a stream, which in January is a torrent, and which in June is a dry, pebbly bed. Thus guarded, this stronghold was, in the Middle Ages, nearly impregnable. The bridge was a weak point in it. The Gothic Gauvains had built it without a bridge. They used to enter it by one of those swinging bridges which a blow of an axe sufficed to destroy. As long as the Gauvains were only viscounts, this was quite good enough for them; but when they became marquises, and left the cavern for the court, they flung a bridge with three arches across the stream, and made themselves accessible from the plain, as they had made themselves accessible to the King. The marquises of the seventeenth century, and the marquises of the eighteenth no longer wished to render themselves impregnable. An imitation of Versailles replaced the traditions of their ancestors. In front of the tower, on the western side, there was a high piece of flat ground which joined the plain. This plateau almost touched the tower, but was divided from it by a very deep ravine, at the bottom of which flowed a stream which was a tributary of the Couesnon. The bridge, which joined the tower and the plateau, was built on lofty piers, and on it was erected, as at Chenonceau, in the Mansard style of architecture, a building which afforded more accommodation than the old tower. But the manners of the inhabitants were still very rude and unpolished, and the lords yet continued to occupy rooms in the tower which closely resembled dungeons. The building on the bridge, which somewhat resembled a small castle, had a long corridor which was used as an entrance, and was called the guard room; above this was the library, and above the library a granary. Long windows with small panes of Bohemian glass, pillars between the windows, medallions carved on the walls,—a three-storied palace; below partisans and muskets, in the middle books, and over all sacks of oats. All this was a little savage, but very princely.

By the side, stern and threatening, rose the tower. It overlooked the light and elegant building with its melancholy height. From its summit it was possible to destroy the bridge.

The two buildings, the one rough and the other elegant, clashed rather than contrasted. There was no bond of union between the two styles. Although it seems as if half circles ought to be similar, yet nothing can be less alike than a perfect Roman arch, and a classical archivault. The tower, which was a fit pendant to the forest, seemed a strange neighbour to a bridge which appeared to have been removed from Versailles. Picture to yourself Alain with the twisted beard, giving his arm to Louis XIV. The conjunction had an air of ill-omen about it. The two different types of majestic architecture formed a whole which had something inexpressibly threatening about it.

From a military point of view, however, the bridge—we must insist—was the weak point of the tower; it adorned it, but it took away from its strength. What it gained in beauty, it had lost in security. The bridge put it on a level with the plateau. Impregnable as it was on the side towards the forest, it was vulnerable on the side of the plain. Before, it had commanded the plateau, now the latter commanded it. An enemy taking up a position there would easily become master of the bridge. The library and the granary

would become allies with the foe against the tower. A library and a granary resemble each other in one point,—both books and straw are combustible. For a besieger who makes use of fire as a weapon, to burn a copy of Homer or a truss of straw is just the same thing. The French proved this to the Germans by burning the library of Heidelberg; and the Germans proved it to the French by the conflagration of the library of Strasbourg.

The bridge, then, built on to La Tourgue was, therefore, in point of strategy, a mistake; but in the seventeenth century under Colbert and Louvois, the Lords of Gauvain no more believed themselves likely to be besieged than did the lords of Rohan, or the lords of Trémouille. In spite, however, the builders of the bridge had taken some precautions. Firstly, they had foreseen the possibility of a conflagration, for below the three windows that looked down on the stream, they had fixed transversely by some cramp irons, which fifty years ago were still to be seen there, a strong ladder whose height equalled the two first stories of the bridge, which surpassed in height three ordinary stories. Secondly, in case of assault, they had cut off the bridge from the tower by means of a strong iron door, heavy, and low. This door was arched, it was locked with a great key, the hiding-place of which was known to the lord of the tower only, and once firmly closed, this door would defy a battering ram, and almost laugh at the power of a cannon ball. It was necessary to cross the bridge to this door, and to pass through the door to enter the tower; there was no other means of ingress.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE IRON DOOR.

THE second story of the castle on the bridge was raised in piles and corresponded with the second stage of the tower, and it was here that, as an additional means of security, the iron door had been placed. The iron door opened on the side of the castle into the library, and on the side of the tower into a large arched hall with a pillar in the centre. This hall, as we have said, was on the second floor of the tower; it was round, the same shape as the tower, and had narrow loopholes looking out on to the surrounding country; the wall was rough and bare, and nothing hid the stones, which, however, were accurately pieced and dovetailed in. This hall was reached by a winding staircase fashioned in the wall,—an easy thing to do where the walls were fifteen feet thick. In the Middle Ages, a city was taken street by street, a house room by room, and a fortress story by story. La Tourgue, in this respect, was very skilfully arranged, and was difficult of access. A spiral staircase, with the first few steps very steep, led from one floor to the other. The doors were slanting and not so tall as a man, and to pass through them it was necessary to lower the head. In war, a head bent down is a head cloven, and at each door the besieged awaited their assailants.

Below the circular hall with the pillar in the centre were two similar chambers, which composed the first and the ground floor, and above were three more. These six chambers placed one upon the other were closed with a covering of solid stone; this was the platform, and could only be reached by a narrow watch-tower. The fifteen-foot wall which it had been necessary to cut through in order to fix the iron door, and in the middle of which it was set, imbedded it in a sort of long passage, so that the door, when it was closed, was from the side of the tower and the side of the bridge in a porch six or seven feet long; and when it was opened these two porches formed one, and made the entrance arch.

In the thickness of the wall of the porch, towards the bridge, a low gate opened with a Saint Gilles' latch, leading into the corridor of the first story below the library. This formed another obstacle to the assailants. The small castle on the bridge had on the side towards the plateau only a steep wall, and the bridge ended there abruptly. A drawbridge placed it in communication with the plateau, and this drawbridge, on account of the height of the plateau, when lowered, formed an inclined plane and gave access to the long

corridor called the guard-room. Even when masters of this corridor, the besiegers, in order to reach the iron door, would have had to have carried by main force the spiral staircase that led to the second story.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LIBRARY.

THE library was an oblong chamber, of the same width and length as the bridge, and with a single door,—the iron one. A false holding door, hung with green cloth, and which swung with a touch, masked the entrance of the porch leading into the tower. The wall of the library from top to bottom, and from floor to ceiling was filled with glazed bookcases, beautiful specimens of the cabinet work of the seventeenth century. Six large windows, three on each side, one over each arch, lighted the library. Through these windows the interior of the room could be seen from the adjoining table land. In the spaces between these windows stood, on pedestals of carved oak, six marble busts: Hermolaüs, of Byzantium; Athenæus, the grammarian; Suidas; Casaubon; Clovis, King of France; and his chancellor, Anachalus, who, by the way, was no more a chancellor than Clovis was a king. There were some books in the library.

One of them had a great reputation. It was an old quarto volume with illustrations, having for its first title "Saint Bartholomew," and for its second, "The Gospel according to Saint Bartholomew," preceded by a preface by Pantœnus, a Christian philosopher, as to whether this gospel should be considered apocryphal, and whether Saint Bartholomew was the same as Nathanael. This work was considered a very great curiosity, and was placed on a lectern in the middle of the library.

In the last century people used to come from great distances to look at it.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LOFT.

THE loft, like the library, had the same shape as the bridge, and was simply a garret under the rafters and trusses of the roof; this formed a huge loft filled with hay and straw, and lighted by six dormer windows. There was no attempt at ornament, except a figure of Saint Barnabas carved over the door, with this verse above it,—

Barnabus sanctus falcem jubet ire per herbam.

A wide and lofty tower of six stories, pierced here and there with loopholes, and embrasures, having for egress and entrance a solitary door of iron, leading to a castle built on a bridge, and secured by a drawbridge, a forest in rear of the tower, in front, a plateau higher than the bridge. Under the bridge a deep narrow ravine full of brushwood and brambles, a roaring torrent in winter, a babbling brook in spring, and a stony ditch in summer. This was the Tower of Gauvain, called by the peasants La Tourgue.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HOSTAGES.

JULY passed away, and August arrived; a wind fierce and heroic swept over France. Two phantoms had flitted away to the distant horizon,—Marat with a knife in his breast, and Charlotte Corday with a severed head. Matters were growing serious. As for La Vendée, beaten in the greater fields of strategy, she took refuge in the smaller ones, in which, as we have said, she was more formidable.

This war had now been transformed into a series of petty combats fought out in the forests. The disasters of the great army called the Catholic and Royal Army had now commenced. A decree had sent the Army of Mayence into La Vendée. Eight thousand Vendéans had been slain at Ancenis; they had been driven back from Nantes, dislodged from Mortagne, expelled from Thouars, hunted from Noir-

moutier, cast out of Cholet, Mortagne, Saumur; they had evacuated Parthenay, abandoned Clisson, retired from before Chatillon; they had lost a flag at Saint Hilaire, had been defeated at Pornic, at Sables, at Fontenay. at Doué, at Château d'Eau at Ponts de Cé; checked at Luçon; were in full retreat from Châtaigneraye, and utterly routed at Roche sur Yon; but on the one part they threatened Rochelle, and on the other an English fleet in the Guernsey waters, under the orders of General Craig, and having on board several English regiments, and some of the best officers of the French Marine, only waited for a signal from the Marquis de Lantenac to land. This landing might once more turn the scale in the favour of the Royalists. Pitt was a criminal statesman; in politics there is treason, even as in a panoply of arms the dagger finds a place. Pitt stabbed our country, and betrayed his own, for is it not betraying a country to dishonour it? and England under his guidance waged a Punic war. She spied, she cheated, she lied. Poacher and Forger, she recoiled from nothing, and descended to the lowest depths of hatred. She monopolised tallow, which cost five francs the pound. An Englishman was taken at Lille on whom was found a letter from Prigint, the agent of Pitt in La Vendée, in which were these lines, "I beg that you will spare no money; we hope that all assassinations will be done prudently. Disguised priests and women are most suited for this duty. Send sixty thousand francs to Rouen, and fifty thousand to Caen." This letter was read in the Convention on the 1st of August by Barère. To this perfidious letter the brutalities of Parrein, and later on, the atrocities of Carrier were the replies. The Republicans of Metz, and of the South, were eager to march against the rebels. A decree ordered the formation of twenty-four companies of pioneers to burn the brushwood and hedges of the Bocage. It was an unheard-of crisis. The war only ceased at one point to break out at another. "*No quarter, no prisoners,*" was the cry on both sides. The history of those days is veiled in gloomy shadows.

In the month of August, La Tourgue was besieged. One evening, as the stars were rising in the calm evening of the dog days, when not a leaf stirred in the forest, not a blade of grass quivered in the fields, through the stillness of the night air was heard the blast of a horn. The sound came from the summit of the tower.

A trumpet answered it from below.

On the top of the tower was an armed man, at the foot, buried in the shade, was a camp. In the darkness, a confused crowd of sombre figures could be distinguished, moving to and fro about the base of the Tower of Gauvain. It was a bivouac of troops. A few fires were kindled under the trees of the woods, and amongst the heath which covered the plateau, clothing the darkness here and there with luminous tints, as though the earth was endeavouring to produce stars at the same moment as the heavens. But these were the fatal stars of war. Upon the side towards the plateau, the bivouac extended to the plains, and on the side of the woods, spread into the thickets.

La Tourgue was blockaded.

The extent of the line of the besieger's camp showed that there was a considerable force assembled. The besieging force clasped the fortress closely, extending from the side of the tower to the rock, and from the bridge to the ravine.

There was a second blast from the horn, which was again answered by the trumpet.

The horn questioned, and the trumpet answered.

The horn, the voice of the tower, said, "Can we speak to you?" and the trumpet, the voice of the camp, answered, "Yes."

At this period the Venédans had not been recognised as belligerents by the Convention, and a decree having been published forbidding parleys with "the brigands," the Republican troops managed as well as they could to exchange those communications which the Law of Nations authorises in ordering war, but forbids in civil conflict. Hence there was a certain understood communication between the horn of the peasant, and the trumpet of the soldier. The first blast was merely an introduction to the matter, the second a question, "Will you listen to

me?" If on this second summons the trumpet remained silent, it was taken as a refusal; but, if it answered, it was a consent, which signified a truce for a short space of time.

The trumpet having replied for the second time, the man at the summit of the tower spoke in these words:—

"Men who are listening to me, I am Gouge le Bruant, nick-named Break the *Blues*, because I have slain so many of your men; called also Imânus, because I mean to kill more than I have already slaughtered. My finger was cut off by a sabre stroke on the barrel of my gun in the attack on Granville; at Laval you guillotined my father, my mother, and my sister Jacqueline, only eighteen years of age. This is who I am. I speak in the name of my lord and master Gauvain de Lantenac, Viscount de Fontenay, Prince of Brittany, Lord of the Seven Forests, and my master. First, you must know that my lord, the marquis, before shutting himself up in this tower, where you have besieged him, gave instructions to carry on the war to six chiefs, his lieutenants. He gave to Delière command of the country between the roads to Brest and Ernée; to Treton the district between Roë and Laval; to Jacquet, otherwise Taillefer, the border line of Haut Maine; to Gualier, called Grand Pierre, Château Gonthier; to Lecomte Craon; Fougères to Dubois Guy; and all Mayenne to Monsieur de Rochambeau. So that you will gain nothing by the capture of this fortress; and even should the marquis die La Vendée, which belongs to God and the King, will never do so. And this I say to warn you. The marquis is at my side; I am his mouthpiece. You who are besieging us, keep silence, for this is what it is necessary for you to hear. Remember that the war you are carrying on against us is not a war of Justice. We are men living in our own country, and we fight in an honourable manner. We are pure and simple beneath the will of God, as the grass beneath the dew. It is the Republic that has attacked us and invaded our fields. She has burnt our houses and our harvests; she has battered down our farmhouses; and our women and our children have been forced to fly bare-footed to the woods for shelter whilst the winter linnet was still singing. You who are below, listen to me; you have tracked us through the forest, and surrounded us in this tower. You have killed or scattered our comrades; you have artillery, and have joined to your forces the garrison and regiments from Mortagne, from Barenton, from Filleul, of Landivy, of Evran, of Tinténiac, and of Vitré; by their means you are attacking us with four thousand five hundred men, and we are nineteen men who hold this tower. You have provisions and ammunition. You have succeeded in springing a mine, and in blowing up a piece of our rock and a portion of our wall. This has made a breach at the foot of the wall, and by this breach you can enter, though it is not open to the sky, and the tower, still solid and upright, makes an arch above it.

"Even now you are preparing for the assault. And we, first, my Lord of Lantenac, who is a Prince of Brittany and secular Prior of the Abbey Saint Marie de Lantenac where a daily mass was established by Queen Jeanne; and after him the other defenders of the tower, who are the Abbé Turmeau whose sobriquet is Grand Francœur; my comrade Guinoiseau, who commands Camp Vert; my comrade Chante en Hiver, commanding Camp Avoine; my comrade La Musette, who is Captain of Camp Fourmis; and I, a peasant born in the town of Daon, through which flows the brook Moriandre,—have all one thing to say to you.

"Men, at the base of the tower, listen!

"We have in our hands three prisoners, three children. These children were adopted by one of your regiments, and they belong to you. We offer to give you up these children on one condition; and that is, that we are permitted to depart unharmed. If you refuse, listen to what will happen. You can only attack us in two ways—by the breach on the forest side, or by the bridge on the side of the plateau. The building on the bridge is three stories in height. In the lower story I, even I, Imânus, who am speaking to you, have put six barrels of tar and one hundred bundles of dried heather; in the loft there is straw; in the middle story there are books and papers. The iron

door which communicates between the bridge and the tower is closely shut. My lord has the key of it. I have pierced a hole beneath the door, and have passed a sulphur match, one end of which is in one of the tar barrels, and the other ready to my hand within the tower. I can set light to it when I like. If you refuse to let us escape, the three children will be placed in the second floor of the house on the bridge, between the place where the sulphur match and the tar is, and the spot where the straw is stored, and the iron door closed on them. If you attack by the bridge, it will be you who will set fire to the building; if you attack by the breach, we shall do it; if you attack by both at once, the fire will be lighted by us both, and, anyhow, the three children will be burnt to death. You have now to accept or decline. Should you accept, we leave. If you refuse, the children will die. I have said all that I wished to say."

The voice of the man on the summit of the tower ceased.

A voice from below answered him promptly.

"We refuse."

This voice was stern and severe.

Another voice less harsh in its accents but full of firmness added, "We give you twenty-four hours in which to surrender at discretion!" There was a moment's silence, and then the same voice continued, "To-morrow, at this hour, if you have not surrendered, we shall take the tower by assault."

And the first voice added, "And then mercy to none."

To this fierce speech another voice from the top of the tower replied. Between the battlements could be seen a figure bending forward, which by the light of the stars all recognised as the redoubtable Marquis de Lantenac. His eyes seemed endeavouring to pierce through the gloom so as to recognise some one, as he cried out, "Hulloa, priest, is that you?"

"Yes, traitor, it is I," answered a harsh voice from below.

CHAPTER XVII.

AS TERRIBLE AS ANY TALE OF ANTIQUITY.

THE inexorable voice was that of Cimourdain; the voice of mercy that of Gauvain. The Marquis de Lantenac had not deceived himself when he thought that he recognised Cimourdain.

A few weeks, and Cimourdain had become famous in the country that the civil war had drenched with blood; no notoriety was more ghastly than that which he had achieved. People said, Marat in Paris, Châlier at Lyons, and Cimourdain in La Vendée. All the respect which the Abbé Cimourdain had formerly won had now vanished; this is ever the result with an apostate priest. Cimourdain inspired all with feelings of horror. People who act with too much severity are unfortunate; those who watch their acts condemn them, though if they could read their inner conscience they might absolve them. A Lycurgus not properly appreciated resembles a Tiberius. As it was, the two men, the Marquis de Lantenac and the Abbé Cimourdain, were equal in the balance of hatred; the curses of the Royalists on Cimourdain counterpoised the execrations of the Republicans on Lantenac. Each of these men was a monster in the eyes of his opponents, and to such a point had this arrived, that while Prieur of the Marne was setting a price on the head of Lantenac, Charette at Noirmourtier was offering a reward for Cimourdain's head. Let us add, that these two men, the marquis and the priest, were up to a certain point the same man. The bronze mask of civil war has two profiles, the one turned to the past, the other towards the future; but both are equally tragic. Lantenac was the first of these profiles, and Cimourdain the second; only the bitter laugh of Lantenac was full of night and gloom, whilst on the death-dooming forehead of Cimourdain was a ray of the light of the morning. Now the besieged garrison of la Tourgue had a moment's breathing time. Thanks to the interposition of Gauvain, a truce of twenty-four hours had been agreed upon.

Imânus had been thoroughly posted up as to the strength of the enemy. By the aid of Cimourdain's requisitions, Gauvain

had now under his command four thousand five hundred men, a portion composed of the National Guard, and the rest of regular troops; with these he had hemmed Lantenac into La Tourgue, and was able to open fire on the tower with ten pieces of artillery. Six guns on the borders of the forest on the tower side, a masked battery, and six on the plateau by the bridge, giving a plonging fire. He had sprung a mine and made a breach at the foot of the tower. So when the twenty-four hours' truce had come to a close, the attack would begin again under the following conditions:—On the tableland and in the woods there were four thousand five hundred men. In the tower, nineteen.

The names of these nineteen besieged might be found in the lists of outlawry. We may perhaps come across them later on.

To command these four thousand five hundred men, which almost formed an army, Cimourdain had wished Gauvain to permit himself to be raised to the rank of Adjutant-General; but Gauvain had declined, saying, "When Lantenac is captured, we will see about it; I have at present deserved nothing." The command of large bodies of men by officers of comparatively humble rank was one of the customs of the Republicans. Bonaparte, some time later, was a simple major of artillery and General Commanding-in-chief of the army of Italy. The Tower of Gauvain was in a strange predicament—a Gauvain was attacking it, and a Gauvain defending it. For this reason there was a certain amount of reserve in the attack, but not in the defence; for Lantenac spared nothing; moreover he had always resided at Versailles, and cared nothing about La Tourgue, with which, indeed, he was scarcely acquainted. He had fled there for refuge, because he had no other place of shelter, and would have destroyed it without the faintest scruple. Gauvain had more respect for it.

The weak point of the stronghold was the bridge, but in the library on the bridge were the family papers, and if the assault was made on that side the bridge would certainly be burnt.

To destroy the archives of the family seemed to Gauvain like destroying the memory of his ancestors. La Tourgue was the family seat of the Gauvains. In this tower were all the records of their race, as all the records of the royal family of France were deposited in the Louvre. All the home associations of Gauvain were there. He had been born there. The intricacies of destiny had caused him to attack those venerable walls which had given him shelter when a child. Could he be impious enough to reduce this dwelling-place to ashes? Perhaps his very cradle was stowed away in some corner of the garret above the library. Some thoughts feel like emotions. Gauvain was deeply moved on finding himself before the ancient dwelling-place of his race. That was why he had hitherto spared the bridge. He had confined his efforts to closing all means of escape by this route, and had had the bridge commanded by a battery, choosing the other side to commence operations upon. Hence the sinking a mine at the foot of the tower. Cimourdain had permitted him to do as he liked; he reproached himself for it, but he bent his brow at all these old-fashioned prejudices, and he indulged in feelings of pity for buildings no more than he did in pity for men. To spare a castle was a commencement of clemency, and that was Gauvain's weak point. Cimourdain knew this well; he watched him narrowly, and drew him back from this path—in his eyes a culpable weakness. Still, he could not help confessing to himself, with a sort of rage, that he had not been able to see La Tourgue without a certain amount of emotion. His heart softened at the sight of the library in which he had first taught Gauvain to read. He had been the priest of Parigné, the adjacent village. He, Cimourdain, had dwelt in the garrets of the castle on the bridge, it was in the library that Gauvain, standing at his knee, had stammered out his alphabet for the first time. It was between the old four walls that he had seen his much-loved pupil, the son of his Soul, grow up in mind and body. This library, this castle, these walls, full of his blessings upon the child, were they to be destroyed and burnt? He granted them a respite, but not without remorse.

He had permitted Gauvain to open

the siege on the opposite side. La Tourgue had its wild side, the tower; its civilised side, the library. Cimourdain had permitted Gauvain to make a breach on the wild side first. In point of fact, that old manor house, attacked by a Gauvain and defended by a Gauvain in the height of the French Revolution, had returned to its old feudal habits. Wars between relatives formed the histories of the Middle Ages. Eteocles and Polynices are Gothic as well as Grecian legends; and Hamlet only did at Elsinore what Orestes did in Argos.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CHANCE OF ESCAPE.

Both sides passed the night in preparations for the morrow.

As soon as the gloomy interview, at which we have assisted, was over, Gauvain made haste to summon his lieutenant to his side.

Guéchamp, with whom we should make acquaintance, was a man of a second-class stamp, trustworthy, bold, and mediocre, better as a soldier than as a leader; thoroughly intelligent up to that point, when it becomes a duty to understand nothing more; never subject to pity; incapable of being corrupted, whether by the venality that attacks the conscience, or the feeling of mercy that corrupts justice. His heart was protected by two shields,—discipline and his orders; like a horse with blinkers on, he walked straight before him, which was the only path that was left open to him. The road in which he moved was straight but narrow. A man to be trusted; stern in command; exact in obedience to orders.

Gauvain at once came to the point with Guéchamp.

"Guéchamp, I want a ladder."

"Commandant, we have none."

"We must have one."

"For escalade?"

"No, for saving life."

Guéchamp thought for a moment, and then answered, "I understand, but for what you require it must be a very tall one."

"It must be long enough to reach up three stories."

"Yes, commandant, that is just the height."

"But it must be a little higher, for we must be sure of success."

"Without doubt."

"How is it that we have no ladder?"

"Commandant, you did not think fit to assault La Tourgue from the plateau; you were satisfied with making a blockade of it on this side; you desired to attack it, not from the bridge, but by the tower. So we only occupied ourselves with the mine, and all idea of escalade was abandoned; so for that reason we have no ladders."

"Have one constructed at once."

"A ladder three stories high cannot be extemporised.

"Join several short ones together."

"In order to do that we must first have the short ones."

"Get them then."

"There are none to be had. Throughout the country the peasants destroy the ladders, just as they break all the wheels off the carts and cut the bridges."

"Yes, that is true; they do all they can to hamper the movements of the Republic."

"They want to prevent us from making use of a cart or from climbing over a wall."

"And yet, I must have a ladder."

"I recollect, commandant, that there is a big carpenter's shop at Javené, near Fougères; there might be one there."

"There is not a moment to be lost."

"When do you want the ladder?"

"To-morrow, at this hour, at the latest."

"I will send an express with all speed to Javené, who shall be furnished with a requisitionary order. At Javené there is a detachment of cavalry who shall escort it back. The ladder can be here to-morrow before sunset."

"Good, that will suffice," said Gauvain. "Do the work quickly; now go!"

Ten minutes afterwards Guéchamp returned and reported to Gauvain,—"Commandant, the express has started for Javené."

Gauvain ascended the rising ground, and remained for a long time contemplating the castle on the bridge which

covered the ravine. The gable of the building, to which there was no other entrance than the low door closed by the raising of the draw-bridge, faced the steep side of the ravine. In order to reach the arches of the bridge from the plateau, it was necessary to descend this precipitous face,—a feat which could be accomplished by the aid of the brushwood. But when once arrived in the moat, the besiegers would be exposed to all the missiles that might be poured upon them from the three-storied house. Gauvain ended by convincing himself that, at the point which the siege had now attained, the real attack must be made by the breach in the tower. He took every precaution to hinder all chances of escape. He drew the lines of investment tighter, closed the ranks of his regiments so that nothing could pass through them. Gauvain and Cimourdain had divided the duties of the investment between them. Gauvain kept the forest side for himself, and Cimourdain the plateau. It had been settled, that whilst Gauvain, supported by Guéchamp, led the assault through the breach, Cimourdain should guard the bridge and ravine, with every gun of his battery pointed, and every match alight.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THE MARQUIS WAS OCCUPIED.

WHILST every preparation for the attack was being made without, within everything was being prepared for a stubborn resistance. It is not without reason that a tower is called in French a "*douve*," for sometimes a tower is breached by a mine, as a cask is pierced by an auger. The wall opens like a bung-hole. This is what had occurred at La Tourgue.

The tremendous perforation of the auger, represented in this instance by two or three hundred-weight of powder, had opened a huge breach in the massive wall. The fissure started from the base of the tower, pierced the wall in its thickest part, and made a kind of misshapen arch in the ground floor. From the outside, the besiegers, in order to render this gap practicable, had enlarged and completed it by a cannonade from the battery. The ground floor, into which this breach opened, was a circular hall entirely empty, with a central pillar which supported the keystone of the vault. This chamber, which was the largest in the tower, was not less than forty feet in diameter. A similar room occupied each story of the tower, but smaller, and with shutters to the loopholes. The lower room had neither loopholes nor embrasures; there was as much air and light to be found in it as in a tomb.

The door of the oubliettes, composed more of iron than of wood, was in this ground-floor room. There was another door that opened on to the staircase leading to the upper chambers. All the staircases were in the thickness of the walls. It was into this lower room that the besiegers had a chance of entering by the breach that they had effected. When once they were masters of this room, they had the rest of the tower to take. Formerly no one could breathe in the lower room, and it was impossible to exist in it twenty-four hours without being suffocated. Now, thanks to the breach, human life could exist in it. That was why the besieged did not attempt to close it.

Besides, what good would there have been in doing it? The cannon would have re-opened it quickly. They stuck into the wall an iron socket, and put a torch in it, which gave them light.

The question was now how to defend themselves? To build up the breach was easy, but useless; a shelter within it would be preferable, a kind of entrenchment with a re-entering angle, a kind of raftered barricade which would permit them to pour a converging fire on to the assailants, and which, leaving the exterior of the breach open, would close up the interior. There was no lack of materials; they soon constructed their shelter, with loop-holes for musketry. The angle of their refuge leaned on the central pillar, and the two wings touched the wall on both sides. When that work was finished, they made little mines in various places where they could best annoy the stormers.

The marquis directed the work. The inventor and the commander, the guide

and the master, a terrible spirit—Lantenac belonged to that race of warriors of the eighteenth century, who, at eighty years of age, could still save cities. He resembled Count d'Alberg, who, when nearly a hundred years old, drove the King of Poland from Riga.

"Courage, my friends," said the marquis. "At the beginning of this century, in 1713, at Bender, Charles XII., shut up in a house with only three hundred Swedes, defended it against twenty thousand Turks."

They barricaded the two lower floors, fortified the rooms, crenellated the alcoves, made the doors secure with wedges driven under them by blows of a mallet, and thus formed a kind of buttress. It was necessary to leave open the spiral staircase, so as to afford free communication; for to close it against the besiegers, would have been to stop it against themselves. To put a place in a state of defence, you will always find one weak point.

The marquis worked indefatigably; strong as a young man, he lifted beams, carried stones, and set an example to all; put his hand to every kind of work, gave orders, assisted, joked, and was friendly with his savage garrison, but still always retained his position as a nobleman,—haughty, yet familiar; elegant, but fierce.

He allowed no one to dispute his orders. He had said, "If half of you were to mutiny, I would have you shot by the other half, and defend the place with the survivors." Words like these make men worship their leader.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT IMÂNUS WAS DOING.

WHILST the marquis was engaged in the tower and the breach, Imânus was busy with the bridge. Since the beginning of the siege, the ladder of escape which had hung transversely below the windows of the second story had, by the orders of the marquis, been taken away. And Imânus had placed it in the library. Perhaps it was the absence of this ladder that Gauvain wished to supply. The windows of the guard-room, on the lower floor, were defended by a triple row of iron bars, firmly set in stone, so that neither ingress nor egress was possible in that direction. There were no bars to the library windows, but they were very lofty. Imânus took with him three men, like himself, capable of everything. These men were Hoisnard, nicknamed Branche d'Or, and the brothers Pique en Bois. Imânus, furnished with a dark lantern, carefully inspected the three stories of the castle on the bridge. Hoisnard was as full of hatred against the Republicans as Imânus, for his brothers had been killed by them. Imânus looked through the upper rooms, which were receptacles for hay and straw, also the ground floor, where he added several pots of combustibles to the tar barrels; he placed a heap of faggots so that they leaned against the casks, and made sure that the sulphur match was in working order. He poured tar over the floor under the barrels and faggots, in which he dipped the end of the match. Then he carried into the library between the ground floor where the tar was, and the garret where the straw was, the three little cots in which René Jean, Gros-Alain, and Georgette lay buried in deep repose. They carried the cradles upstairs very carefully, so as not to disturb the little ones. They were simple village cots, a kind of low wicker basket, which rested on the ground, so that a child could easily get in and out; near each cot Imânus placed a bowl of soup with a wooden spoon. The escape ladder, unhooked from its iron rests, had been placed on the floor against the wall. Imânus arranged the cots in a line against the opposite wall. Then, as though he thought that a thorough draught might be useful, he opened all the six tall windows of the library.

It was a summer's night, warm, with a blue sky. He despatched the brothers Pique en Bois to open all the windows of the upper and lower stories. He had noticed on the eastern side of the outer wall a great withered mass of ivy, the colour of touchwood, which framed the windows of the three floors from top to bottom. He thought that this might safely be left. Imânus cast a last searching glance around him, and he and his

men left the castle and returned to the tower. Imânus double-locked the massive iron door, looked carefully at the heavy bolts, nodded his head in token of satisfaction at the match which passed through the aperture that he had made, and which was now the only communication between the castle and the tower. The train started from the circular chamber, passed under the iron door, glided like a snake down the spiral staircase to the leading lower story of the tower, and ended in a heap of faggots reposing in a pool of tar. Imânus calculated that it would take about a quarter of an hour for the match, when lighted in the tower, to ignite the tar under the library. All arrangements concluded, and the work thoroughly inspected, he gave back the key of the iron door to the marquis, who put it in his pocket. It was of the utmost importance that every move of the besiegers should be watched, and so Imânus, with his huntsman's horn at his belt, posted himself as watchman on the battlements. Whilst he was keeping one eye on the forest and another on the plateau, he had his powder horn and his bullet bag handy, so with some old newspapers he occupied himself in making cartridges.

When the sun rose, it shone upon eight battalions in the forest, with sabres belted on, cartridge cases at their waists, and muskets with fixed bayonets ready for the assault; on the plateau a battery with tumbrils, and cases of shot; within the tower, nineteen men loading guns, muskets, blunderbusses, and pistols, — and three little children sleeping peacefully in their cradles.

BOOK III.

THE MASSACRE OF SAINT BARTHOLOMEW.

CHAPTER I.

THE MASSACRE OF SAINT BARTHOLOMEW.

THE children woke up. It was the little girl who was the first to do so. The awakening of children is like the opening of buds; a sort of perfume seems to exhale from their innocent souls. Georgette, the last born, one year and eight months old, who in the month of May was still at the breast, raised up her little head, sat up in her cot, looked at her feet, and began to babble. A ray of the morning sun fell across her bed; it would have been hard to have decided which was the most rosy—Georgette's little foot, or the sunbeam.

The other two still slept. Boys sleep more soundly than girls. Georgette, full of life and gaiety, continued to babble. René Jean had brown hair, Gros-Alain chestnut, Georgette's was quite fair. Tints of the hair go with the age, and change later in life. René Jean looked like a miniature Hercules, he slept lying on his stomach, his two fists in his eyes. Gros-Alain's legs were hanging over the side of his cot. They were all three in tatters. The clothes which the regiment of the Red Cap had given them were torn to shreds. They had not a shirt between them. The two boys were almost naked. Georgette was wrapped in some old fragments of dress, which had been a skirt, and were now hardly anything at all. Who had taken care of these children? It is impossible to say. Not a mother. These wild peasants, whose days were passed in combats, had carried them with them from forest to forest, and shared their soup with them. That was all, and the little ones got on as best they could. They had everyone for a mother, and no one for a father. But around the rags of children there is a halo of light. They were very pretty.

Georgette still babbled. As a bird twitters, so a child prattles, but it is the same hymn that both are expressing,—a hymn indistinct and inarticulate, but full of profound meaning. The child, unlike

the bird, has before it the gloomy fate to which all humanity is heir to. The thought of this casts a feeling of sorrow over the heart of the man who listens to the joyous song of a child. The sublimest of all songs that can be heard upon this earth, is a human soul lisping through the lips of a child. This confused murmuring of a thought, which is yet only an instinct, contains an indescribably innocent appeal to eternal justice; perhaps it is a protest made on the very threshold before entering life, a protestation humble and yet saddening. This ignorance, which smiling at the infinite, places upon creation the responsibility of the destiny, which shall be meted out to this feeble and defenceless creature. If misfortune follows after this, it seems like an abuse of confidence.

The prattle of a child, is more, and yet less than speech. It has no metre, and yet it is a song. It has no syllables, and yet it is a language, a soft murmur that has its beginning in the heavens, and will not have its termination on this earth. It commenced, and will go on; it is a continuation. These lispings are what the child murmured when it was an angel, and are what it will say when entering eternity. The cradle has a Yesterday, even as the grave has a To-morrow. This yesterday and this to-morrow unite their double mystery in that strange warbling; and there is no greater proof of the existence of God, of eternity, of the duality of destiny, than in the terrible shade over the roseate soul.

Whatever Georgette was prattling about, it did not make her sad, her pretty face was all one happy smile. Her mouth laughed, her eyes laughed, the dimples in her cheeks laughed. For this smile seemed to beam a welcome to the morning. The soul believes in the sun's rays. The sky was blue, the day warm; it was lovely weather. The frail little thing, without knowing anything, without understanding anything, softly buried in meditation in which there was no thought, felt herself in safety in the arms of nature, amidst those massive trees, in that faithful grass, in that pure and peaceful rustic scene, amidst the murmur of nests, of rippling springs, of insects, and of leaves, above all of which gleamed the sun in all its splendour of innocence.

After Georgette, René Jean, the eldest, the big boy who was more than four years old, awoke. He got up, stepped manfully out of his cot, and perceiving the bowl by his side, found it the most natural thing in the world, and, sitting down on the ground beside it, commenced to eat his soup.

The prattling of Georgette had not awakened Gros-Alain, but at the clatter of the spoon against the bowl, he sprang up with a bound and opened his eyes. Gros-Alain was three years old. He soon caught sight of his bowl; he had only his hand to stretch out; he took hold of it, and without attempting to get out of bed, he put the bowl on his knees and the spoon in his hand, and, imitating René Jean, began eating.

Georgette did not hear them, and the undulations of her voice seemed to modulate the dream in which she was lulled. Her large, open eyes gazed on high, and were divine in their expression; whatever roof or ceiling a child may have above its head, there is but one thing reflected in its eyes, and that is—heaven!

When René Jean had finished, he scraped the bottom of the bowl with the spoon, and said in a dignified tone, "I have eaten my soup."

This roused Georgette from her dream.

"Foup!" said she. Then seeing that René Jean had finished his soup, and that Gros-Alain was still engaged with his, she took the bowl that was near her, and began to eat hers, not, however, without as often putting the spoon into her ear as into her mouth. Every now and then she cast aside civilisation, and used her fingers. Gros-Alain, after having finished his soup, and imitated his brother by carefully scraping out his bowl, got up to join him, and ran behind his back.

All of a sudden from the base of the tower on the side of the forest, came the loud, stern note of the trumpet.

The horn from the top of the tower replied to the summons.

This time it was the trumpet that questioned, and the horn that answered.

The trumpet blew a second summons, and once more the horn replied.

Then from the borders of the wood came a voice clear and distinct, though far away, which cried out,—"Brigands, a last summons! If by sunset you have not given yourselves up at discretion, we shall commence the attack."

A voice answered from the summit of the tower in a hoarse roar,

"Attack!"

The voice below continued,

"As a last warning a cannon will be fired half-an-hour before the attack!"

The voice from on high answered once more,

"Attack!"

These voices did not reach the children, but the horn and the trumpet had more powerful tones, and Georgette, at the first blast, raised her head and ceased to eat; at the note of the horn she put her spoon back into her porringer; and at the second blast of the trumpet she lifted the first finger of her right hand, and waving it gently backwards and forwards, she marked the time as it was prolonged, and when both trumpet and horn were silent, she looked sad and remained still, with her finger still raised in the air. "Moosick," she murmured. She was trying to say Music!

The two elder boys, René Jean, and Gros-Alain had paid no attention to horn or trumpet, they were busy with something else. A wood beetle was crawling across the floor of the library.

Gros-Alain saw it first, and cried out,

"A beast!"

René Jean ran up to him.

Gros-Alain continued,

"It pricks."

"Do not hurt it," said René Jean.

And both the boys began to watch it as it crawled along.

And now Georgette had finished her soup, and had turned her attention to her brothers. René Jean and Gros-Alain were in bay of one of the windows gravely bending over the wood beetle.

Their foreheads touched each other, and their hair was mingled. In wonder and delight they held their breath, and watched the insect which had stopped short in its journey, not at all flattered by so much admiration. Georgette, seeing her brothers contemplating something, was anxious to know what it was. It was not easy to get to them, but for all that she ventured. The path bristled with difficulties, there were so many things strewn about the floor,—foot-stools upset, bundles of papers, packing-cases open and empty, trunks, and all sorts of rubbish, round which she must make her way,—a perfect archipelago of reefs. Georgette, however, risked it. She began by getting out of her cot, that was the first effort that she had to make; then she got amongst the rocks at once, wound herself through the straits, pushed herself over a stool, crawled between two boxes, passed through a heap of papers, climbing up one side, rolling down the other, regardless of the display she made of her little naked limbs, and managed at last to reach what a sailor would have called "blue water,"—that is, an open space on the floor not encumbered by any litter; then she sprang forwards, traversed the space, which was the entire width of the room, on her hands and knees, and with the agility of a kitten got near to the window. Then she encountered a serious and formidable obstacle. The tall ladder lying along the wall, reached to this window, the end of it passing a little way beyond the angle of the bay. It formed a sort of cape between Georgette and her brothers which she would have to double to get to them. She made a halt, and thought the matter out. After some serious debate, she came to a decision. She boldly seized the rungs which were vertical, and not horizontal as the ladder lay on its side, with her rosy fingers. She tried to raise herself on her feet and fell back; she made a fresh effort and fell a second time; but her third attempt was successful. Then planting herself firmly on her feet, she caught hold of the rungs in succession, and traversed the length of the ladder. When she reached the end, there was no more support for her. She staggered, but grasping with both hands the sides, she steadied herself, got round the dangerous angle, and looking at René Jean and Gros-Alain, she began to laugh.

At that moment René Jean, quite satisfied with observations which he had made on the wood beetle, lifted up his head, and said, "It is a she-creature." The laughter of Georgette made René Jean

laugh, and their merriment made Gros-Alain join in with them.

When Georgette had effected the junction with her brothers they formed a little council, sitting on the ground.

But the wood beetle had crawled away. He had taken advantage of Georgette's laughter to creep into a hole in the flooring.

Other events followed the disappearance of the beetle.

Firstly, the swallows flew past the windows. Their nests were most probably under the eaves of the roof, so they flew close to the windows; a little alarmed at the sight of the children, they described great circles in the air, and uttered the gentle note of summer. This attracted the notice of the children, and the wood beetle was forgotten.

Georgette pointed out the swallows with her finger. "Chuck-seys!" cried she.

But René Jean scolded her. "Miss, you must not say chuckseys; you know they are birds."

"Birzey," answered Georgette.

Then they all sat down, and looked at the swallows. All of a sudden a bee came in. A bee resembles a soul. He goes from flower to flower, as a soul flits from star to star, and gathers honey, as a soul does light.

Their new visitor made a great noise as it came in; it buzzed loudly as though it were saying, "I come! I have come from seeing the roses, and now I have come to see the children. Pray, what is going on here?"

A bee is a strict housekeeper, its hum is almost a reprimand. The eyes of the children never quitted their new visitor as long as it stayed with them. The bee investigated the library thoroughly, searched all the corners, fluttered about as though it was at home in its own hive, and flitted, winged and tuneful, from bookcase to bookcase, reading, it seemed, the names of the volumes through the glass doors, as if it had reason and intellect. When it had explored everything completely, it flew away.

"He is going home," said René Jean.

"It is a beast," said Gros-Alain.

"No," replied René Jean, "it is a fly."

"A fi!" said Georgette.

Just then Gros-Alain, who had picked up on the floor a cord with a knot at one end of it, took the other end between his finger and thumb, and made a sort of windmill with it, watching its revolutions with great gravity.

Georgette had again thrown herself upon her hands and knees, and recommenced her fickle course backwards and forwards across the floor, until she discovered a venerable arm-chair covered with tattered tapestry, so moth-eaten, that the horsehair protruded in several places. She made a halt here, enlarged the holes, and began industriously to pull out the horsehair. All at once, she raised one finger, which signified "Listen."

Both her brothers turned their heads towards her.

A vague and distant sound was heard from the outside. It was probably caused by some manœuvre being executed in the camp of the besiegers, some strategetic movement in the forest. Horses neighed, the continual roll of drums was heard, the tumbrels and artillery waggons rumbled along. Chains clashed and rattled, military signals called and answered. A mixture of strange and savage sounds which seemed at last to combine into a weird harmony, to which the children listened with charmed and delighted ears.

"It is God who does that," said René Jean.

The noise ceased.

René Jean had fallen into a reverie. How quickly ideas rise and fall in children's brains! What causes the strange upheaval of those recollections so troubled, and yet so short in duration? In that sweet, melancholy little soul, there was an intermingling of the ideas of a kind Providence, of clasped hands, of the memory of a tender smile which had been cast on it before, and was no longer so; and as all these ideas floated through his mind René Jean's lips opened, and he uttered the word, "Mother!"

"Mother," repeated Gros-Alain.

"Muzzer," murmured Georgette.

Then René Jean began to jump about. Seeing this, Gros-Alain began to do the same. He imitated every word and gesture of his brother. Three years of age copies four years, but twenty months retains

its independence. Georgette continued sitting on the floor, uttering a word from time to time, for she had not yet advanced so far as sentences. She was a thinker, she spoke in apothegms, she was quite monosyllabic.

But after a little time the example that had been set her proved infectious, and she finished by endeavouring to imitate the example of her brothers, and then those three little pairs of naked feet began to run, to dance, to totter over the dust of the old oaken floor under the severe gaze of the marble busts, towards which Georgette every now and then cast an uneasy glance, murmuring the word *Manmans*. Probably in Georgette's language this signified something which looked human, but which was not one, perhaps a first glimmering idea of the world of spectres.

Georgette, rolling rather than walking, followed her brothers, but her favourite mode of progression was on all fours.

Suddenly René Jean, who had approached one of the windows, lifted up his head, dropped it again, and hurried off to hide himself in a corner formed by the projecting recess of the window. He had at that moment caught sight of a man looking at him. It was a soldier from the camp of the *Blues* on the plateau, who, taking advantage of the truce, and perhaps infringing it a little, had risked venturing to the very edge of the precipitous descent from which the interior of the library was visible. When Gros-Alain saw René Jean hide himself, he did the same, and Georgette hastened to crouch behind them. So they all three remained motionless and silent, Georgette pressing her finger against her lips. After a few minutes' interval, René Jean ventured to peep out, the soldier was still there. He drew back his head quickly; the three little ones hardly ventured to breathe. This suspense lasted some time. Finally Georgette began to grow tired of fear, and mustered up courage to look out; the soldier had gone. They began again to run about and play.

Gros-Alain, though he was the imitator and the admirer of René Jean, had the bump of discovery strongly developed in him. His brother and sister saw him suddenly run towards them capering wildly, and drawing after him a little four-wheeled cart which he had disinterred from the rubbish lying about. This doll's carriage had lain for years in the dust, a fit companion for books of science and busts of philosophers. Perhaps it had been one of Gauvain's toys when he was a child. Gros-Alain had made a whip of his piece of string, which he cracked proudly. Such are inventors! when you cannot discover America, you find a toy waggon; it is ever thus.

But all must share in the discovery; René Jean wished to harness himself to it, Georgette to get into it. She attempted to sit in it; René Jean was the horse, Gros-Alain the driver.

But the driver did not know his business, and the horse had to teach it to him. René Jean cried out to Gros-Alain, "Say, Gee up!"

"Gee up!" repeated Gros-Alain.

The cart upset, and Georgette was flung out, that would make an angel scream. Georgette screamed. Then she had a faint desire to cry.

"Miss," said René Jean, "you are too big for that."

"I big?" lisped Georgette.

And her bigness consoled her for her tumble.

The sill outside the windows was excessively broad; the dust that blew from the plain on which the heath grew had collected there, and the rain had converted this dust into mould. The wind had brought seeds, and a bramble bush had seized on the opportunity to take root there. This bush belonged to the species called fox blackberry. It was the month of August and the bush was covered with berries; a branch had pushed its way through the window and hung down nearly to the floor.

Gros-Alain, having discovered the cord and the waggon, now discovered the bramble. He went up to it, picked a berry and ate it.

"I am hungry," said René Jean.

Georgette came up at full speed on all fours. Between them, the three stripped the branch, and devoured all the blackberries. They dyed their hands and faces with the purple juice, until from three little angels, they changed into fauns,—a transformation which would have horrified

Dante and delighted Virgil. They filled the room with their laughter. Every now and then the thorns pricked their fingers. To every pleasure there is some pain attached.

Georgette held out her finger to René Jean on which a minute speck of blood was visible, and pointing to the bush said, "Him pricks."

Gros-Alain, who had been pricked too, gave a suspicious glance at the bramble, and said, "It's a beast."

"No," answered René Jean, "it is a stick."

"Then," said Gros-Alain, "a stick is wicked."

This time again Georgette, though half inclined to cry, burst into a laugh.

In the meanwhile René Jean, perhaps jealous of the discoveries made by his younger brother, had conceived a grand idea. For some time past whilst busy eating the berries, and pricking his fingers, his eyes had frequently turned towards the lectern, mounted on a pivot, and standing, like an isolated monument, in the centre of the library. On it lay the celebrated volume of Saint Bartholomew. It was a magnificent and almost priceless book. This edition of Saint Bartholomew had been published at Cologne by the famous editor of the Bible of 1682,—Blœuw, in Latin, Cœsius. It had been turned out by box presses, straightened by ox sinews. It was printed, not on Dutch, but on that exquisite Arabian paper, so much admired by Edrisi, which is composed of a mixture of silk and cotton, and always remains white. The binding was gilt leather, and the clasps silver. The boards were made of that parchment, which the parchment dealers of Paris had made a vow to buy at the Hall of Saint Mathurin, and "*nowhere else.*" The book was full of engravings, both on wood and copper, with maps of various countries. It had at the commencement a protest on the part of the printers, paper makers, and publishers against the edict of 1635, which put a tax on leather, coffins, cloven-footed animals, sea fish, and paper. At the back of the frontispiece could be read a dedication to the Gryphes, who were to Lyons what the Elzevirs were to Amsterdam. All these united produced a magnificent work, almost as rare as the *Apostol* in the library of Moscow.

The book was very beautiful, it was for this reason that René Jean looked at it for perhaps too long a time. It happened to be open at the picture representing the Saint carrying his skin over his arm. The boy could see the print from where he stood. When he had finished all the berries, he looked on it with a terrible feeling of desire, and Georgette following the direction of her brother's gaze, perceived the engraving, and exclaimed, "Picksher!"

Her exclamation seemed to decide René Jean. Then a wonderful event took place which utterly stupefied Gros-Alain. There was a huge oaken chair standing in one corner of the library; René Jean walked deliberately to it, seized it, and without any assistance dragged it up to the lectern. Then he climbed up on it and seized the book with both his hands. When he had attained this position, he felt the necessity of displaying his generosity, so laying hold of the upper portion of the "Picksher," he tore it carefully down; this tear went right across the figure of Saint Bartholomew, but that was not René Jean's fault; he left in the book one side, one eye, and a portion of the halo of the ancient apocryphal Evangelist, and offered to Georgette the other half of the Saint with all his skin. Georgette took it, and said, "Manmans."

"Me too!" cried Gros-Alain.

Tearing the first page out of a book by children is like the first shedding of blood by men. It sets them to the work of destruction.

René Jean turned over the leaf, and next to the Saint came the portrait of the commentator Pantœnus. René Jean gave Pantœnus to Gros-Alain.

In the meantime Georgette tore her large pieces into two smaller, then again into four, and went on with her work, until history might record that Saint Bartholomew, after having been flayed in Armenia, was quartered in Brittany. The quartering completed, Georgette held out her hand to René Jean, and said, "More."

After the Saint and the Commentator

followed the portraits of the peevish-looking Glossarists. The first to hand was Gavantus. René Jean tore him out, and put Gavantus into Georgette's hand.

Every one of Saint Bartholomew's commentators met with the same fate in their turn.

There is a certain feeling of superiority in giving away; René Jean kept nothing for himself; Gros-Alain and Georgette looked at him admiringly, that was quite sufficient for him, and he was satisfied with his popularity with the public.

René Jean was inexhaustible in his generosity, and offered to Gros-Alain *Alphonse Tostat*, and *Cornelius e lapide* to Georgette; then Gros-Alain *Fabricio Pignatelli*, and Georgette *Father Stilting*. Gros-Alain received *Henry Hammond*, and Georgette *Father Roberti*, together with a view of the city of Douai, where he was born in 1619. Gros-Alain had the protest of the paper makers, and Georgette the dedication to the Gryphes.

There were, in addition, the maps. René Jean distributed them; Ethiopia to Gros-Alain, and to Georgette Lycaonia. When this was done he threw the book on the floor. That was a moment of terror. With mingled feelings of delight and fear, Gros-Alain and Georgette saw René Jean pucker up his brows, stiffen his muscles, clench his fists, and push the massive volume from the lectern. A magnificent volume treated with contempt is a melancholy spectacle. The heavy book dislodged from its resting-place, hung for a moment, hesitated, seemed to make an effort to recover itself, and then fell, broken, crumpled, torn from its bindings, its clasps shattered, in one miserable heap upon the floor. Luckily it did not strike the children. They were only bewildered, not hurt. All victories do not end so well.

Like all deeds of glory, it made a great noise, and raised a cloud of dust.

Having flung the book on the floor, René Jean got down from the chair. There was a short pause of silent terror. Victory even has its moments of affright. The children pushed one another's hands, and stood looking at the ruined volume from a distance. But after a little thinking Gros-Alain came forward and gave it a kick.

It was all over now. The appetite for destruction had been aroused; René Jean kicked it, Georgette kicked it, which made her fall on the floor in a sitting position, but she profited by this to cast herself on St. Bartholomew. All reverence was gone. René Jean precipitated himself on it; Gros-Alain did the same. Joyous, wild with delight, and merciless, tearing out the engravings, cutting the leaves, wrenching away the markers, scratching the binding, ungluing the leather, breaking away the nails from the silver corners, crumpling up the parchment, and utterly destroying the very text itself; using feet, hands, nails, and teeth; flushed laughing, but slightly ferocious, these three angels of prey demolished the helpless Evangelist. They annihilated Armenia, Judea, Benevento, where the remains of the Saints are deposited; Nathanael, who is perhaps Bartholomew under another name; Gelasius, the Pope, who gave it as his opinion that the Gospel of St. Bartholomew was not authentic; and all the portraits and all the maps in the book. They were so absorbed in their work of destruction that a mouse could have passed them unseen. It was a perfect butchery.

To tear in pieces history, legend, science, miracles, whether true or false, the Latin of the Church, superstition, fanaticism, and mystery, to rend a whole religion from top to bottom, would be a hard task for three giants; and yet three little children achieved it.

They passed hours at the work, but it was accomplished at last; and there was nothing left of Saint Bartholomew. When they had done, and the last page had been torn out, the last engraving lying on the ground, and nothing was left of the book but the edges of the leaves and prints in the skeleton of the binding, René Jean sprang to his feet, and looking at the floor strewn with all the scattered leaves, clapped his hands.

Gros-Alain, too, clapped his hands.

Georgette picked up one of the leaves from the ground, and leaning on the window ledge, which came up to her chin, began tearing the page into little pieces and throwing it out of the window. René Jean and Gros-Alain followed her example, and very soon, page after page, torn up by

their active little fingers, flew out of the window scattering the ancient volume to the winds of heaven. Georgette, looking half sadly at the scraps of paper floating in the breeze said,

"Bufferfies."

So the massacre concluded in a dispersal by the winds.

Thus was St. Bartholomew put to death a second time, having been first martyed in the year of our Lord 49.

But the evening was now drawing near; there was a feeling of languor in the air, and Georgette's eyes began to close. René Jean went to his cot, and drawing out the sack of straw which served as a mattress, dragged it to the window, and throwing himself upon it, said, "Let us all lie down."

Gros-Alain rested his head on René Jean, and Georgette on Gros-Alain, and then the three little criminals went to sleep.

The warm breeze entered by the open windows; the scent of the wild flowers from the hills and ravines united with the breath of the evening. Nature was calm and pitiful. Everything shone with the light of peace and love. The sun showered his caresses in the form of light on all creation.

Everywhere that harmony could be heard and felt which emanates from the infinite sweetness of inanimate objects. There is a sense of maturity in the infinite. Creation is a miracle at the zenith of its bloom. It perfects its grandeur by its goodness. It seemed as if the presence of some invisible being could be felt, taking those mysterious precautions which, in the daily strife of the opposing elements of life, protect the weak against the strong; and yet there was beauty everywhere, the splendour of the scene was only equalled by its peacefulness. The landscape, which seemed to slumber, had that soft hazy effect which the change of light and shadow produce on the rivers and fields. The mist rose towards the heavens, like thoughts melting into visions; the birds flew noisily round La Tourgue; the swallows peeped in through the windows, as if they too wished to be sure that the children were wrapped in sleep. They were beautifully posed, one reclining on the other, half nude, like little Cupids. They were pure and lovable. The united ages of the three only amounted to nine years. They were having dreams of Paradise, which were reflected in smiles on their lips. Perhaps God Himself was whispering in their ears: they belonged to the class which all tongues and ages have styled the blesséd and helpless. They were made majestic by their very innocence. All was silence around them, as though the breath that issued from their tender bosoms was the especial care of the universe, and listened to by all creation. The leaves did not rustle, the grass did not stir. It seemed as though the mighty star-studded firmament held its breath, lest it should disturb these three humble angelic slumberers; and nothing has a more sublime effect than that reverent respect of nature in the presence of its most fragile productions.

The sun was reaching its hour of rest, he almost touched the horizon. Suddenly a bright flash came from the forest, followed by a sound like thunder.

A gun had just been fired. The echoes took up the detonation, and repeated it with terrible precision. The roar which hill repeated to hill was frightful. It awoke Georgette.

She raised her head, slightly put up her little finger, and cried, "Boom!"

The sound died away, silence once more resumed its sway; Georgette laid her head upon Gros-Alain, and once more relapsed into slumber.

BOOK IV.

THE MOTHER.

CHAPTER I.

DEATH PASSES.

On that night, the mother, whom we have seen making her way at hazard, had been walking all day. It was what she did every day; she went on straight in front of her and never stopped; for the sleep which she snatched in the first shelter that she came to could not be called rest. She ate here and there, picking up food as the birds do their nourishment. She ate and slept just enough to prevent her falling dead on the road. She had passed the night in a deserted barn. The civil war had made many such. In a lonely field she had found four walls, and an open door, a heap of straw beneath the ruins of a roof, and she had thrown herself down, feeling through the straw the scrambling of the rats, and seeing the stars through the dilapidated rafters. She had slept for some hours, and then rising in the middle of the night, had continued her route, so as to make as much progress as she could before the great heat of the day commenced. For those who travel on foot in the summer months, midnight is more merciful a time than midday.

She followed as best she could the rough route that the peasant of Vantortes had given her, and made her way as straight as she could to the west. Had there been anyone near enough to have listened to her, they would have heard her murmur without emotion, in a low voice, "La Tourgue." This, with the names of her three children, was all that she seemed to be able to carry in her brain.

All the time that she was walking, she was thinking. She thought of all her sufferings, and all that she had endured; of her meetings with people; of the insults that she had had to put up with; the bargains proposed and agreed to, now for a shelter, again for a morsel of bread, sometimes even for a mere indication of the road. An unfortunate woman has more to endure than a miserable man, liable as she is to brutal treatment. Terrible wandering journey! But after all she cared for nothing, could she but discover her children. The first event in her day's journey had been her arrival at a village on her way. The sun had hardly risen, and the shadows of night still hovered around, and yet some doors were half-opened in the main street, and faces with their features sharpened by curiosity were gazing from the windows. The place had the appearance of a disturbed hive, and this was caused by the sound of wheels and the click of ironwork that had made itself heard. In the square in front of the church a startled group of peasants was standing, watching something that was descending the hill over which the road to the village ran. It was a heavy four-wheeled waggon, drawn by five horses harnessed to it by chains. On it was a heap of strange objects which resembled a collection of long poles; in the centre lay a misshapen mass, covered by a tilt which had the air of a pall. Ten mounted men preceded the cart and ten followed behind it. These men wore three-cornered hats, and above their shoulders rose what appeared to be the points of naked sabres. The procession advanced slowly, and showed black and distinct against the horizon. The waggon looked black, and so did the harness; the escort was black, and behind them gleamed the ghastly pallor of the morning. The thing entered the village, and moved towards the square.

The day had broken during the time that the waggon had taken to descend the hill, and they were now able to see the procession more distinctly. It seemed like a masque of shadows, for no sound issued from it.

The horsemen were gendarmes, and held their drawn swords in their hands. The tilt was black.

The unhappy wandering mother entered the village at the other side, and approached the crowd of peasants at the moment when the gendarmes and the waggon reached them. There was a cross-fire of whispered questions, and answers.

"What is that?"

"It is the guillotine passing."

"Where does it come from?"

"From Fougères."

"Where is it going to?"

"To Parigné, they say; I am not certain, but I hear it is going to some castle in that direction."

"To Parigné?"

"Let it go where it likes, as long as it does not halt here."

That great waggon, with its load veiled by a sort of shroud, that team, those gendarmes, the clashing of the chains, the silence of the men, and the dim light of the morning, gave a spectral appearance to the whole scene.

The procession crossed the square and passed through the village, which was situated in a hollow between two hills. At the end of a quarter of an hour the peasants who had remained as though petrified saw the melancholy procession appear at the top of the further hill. The heavy wheels jolted in the ruts, the trace chains clanked in the morning breeze, the sabres of the escort gleamed. The sun rose up, and at a sudden turn of the road, the whole disappeared.

It was at that moment that Georgette woke up in the library, and looking at her sleeping brothers, wished her rosy feet a good morning.

CHAPTER II.

THE VOICE OF DEATH.

THE mother had gazed on the passage of this gloomy object, but had not understood it, or indeed sought to do so, having before her eyes no other vision than her children lost to her in the gloom. She, too, left the village shortly after the escort and its charge had passed through, and followed the same route, some little distance behind the rear troop of gendarmes. Suddenly the word "guillotine" recurred to her memory. The uncultured peasant Michelle Fléchard did not understand what this meant, but a certain feeling of instinct warned her, and she felt, she knew not why, a shiver run through her body. It seemed to her horrible to walk behind this thing, and she turned off to the left, taking a path which led through the trees, which was, in point of fact, a part of the Forest of Fougères. After having wandered about for some time, she saw a belfry and some roofs belonging to one of the villages on the borders of the wood, and she directed her steps thither. She was growing hungry. This village was one of those in which the Republicans had established a military post. She went through it until she arrived at the Town Hall. In this village also there were signs of terror and anxiety. A crowd had collected round the steps which led up to the door of the Hall. On the threshold stood a man, with a guard of soldiers round him, holding in his hand a large sheet of paper, which he unfolded. On his right was a drummer, and on his left a billsticker with his paste-pot and brushes. On a balcony over the door of the Hall, the mayor was standing, having a tricoloured sash tied on over his peasant's garments.

The man with the sheet of paper was the public crier; he had on his official belt of circuit to which was suspended a little pouch, which showed that he had to go from village to village, to make some proclamation through the country.

At the moment when Michelle Fléchard approached, he had opened his paper, and had begun to read in a loud voice,

"THE FRENCH REPUBLIC ONE AND INDIVISIBLE."

The drummer gave a roll of the drum. There was a hurried movement amongst the crowd. Some took off their caps, others thrust their hats down more closely over their brows. At that time in La Vendée, you could nearly always recognise a man's political opinions by his head-dress. Hats were a mark of the Royalists, caps of the Republicans. All voices were hushed, and men listened as the crier read,

"In virtue of the orders that we have

received, and the powers entrusted to us by the Committee of Public Safety——,"

Here the drum beat again, and the crier continued,—

"And in execution of a decree of the National Convention, which outlaws all rebels taken with arms in their hands, and which further provides capital punishment for all those who shall give them an asylum, or assist them to escape——"

A peasant standing near, whispered to his neighbour,

"What is *capital punishment?*"

"I do not know," answered the other in the same tone.

The crier shook his paper in the air.

"In accordance with Article 17 of the Decree of April 30th, which grants full power to delegates, and sub-delegates against the rebels: We declare outlaws ——"

He paused here, and then continued,

"Those individuals known under the names and nicknames which follow:—"

The crowd listened eagerly.

"Lantenac, ex-marquis and brigand."

"That is my lord," murmured a peasant.

The crier continued,—"Lantenac, brigand; Imânus, brigand."

Two peasants looked up. "That is Gouge le Bruant," said one.

"Yes. Break the *Blues*," said the other.

The crier went on with his list.

"Grand Francœur, brigand."

There was a murmur in the crowd. "That is a priest."

"Yes, his reverence the Abbé Turmeau."

"Yes, he is curate at the other side of the forest, by La Chapelle."

"And a brigand to boot," said a man in a cap.

The crier read on.

"Boisnouveau, brigand; the two brothers Pique en Bois, brigands; Houzard, brigand."

"That is Monsieur de Quélen," observed a peasant.

"Panier, brigand."

"That is Monsieur Sepher."

"Place Nette, brigand."

"That is Monsieur Jamois."

The crier went on with his list, paying no attention to his hearers' commentaries.

"Guinoiseau, brigand; Chatenay, called Robi, brigand."

A peasant whispered, "Guinoiseau is the same as Le Blond; Chatenay comes from Saint Ouen."

"Hoisnard, brigand," went on the crier.

In the crowd could be heard, "He comes from Ruillé."

"Yes, it is Branche d'Or."

"His brother was killed in the attack on Pontorson."

"Yes, Hoisnard Malonnieu."

"A fine young fellow of nineteen."

"Pay attention!" shouted the crier. "We are coming to the end of the list. Bellevigne, brigand; La Musette, brigand; Sabretout, brigand; Brin d'Amour, brigand."

A youth nudged a girl in the crowd, who smiled.

The crier continued, "Chanteen Hiver, brigand; Le Chat, brigand."

"That is Moulard," muttered a peasant.

"Tabouze, brigand."

"That is Gauffre!" exclaimed another peasant.

"There are two Gauffres," said a woman.

"And both of them good fellows," growled a lad.

Again the crier waved his paper, and the drum beat.

The official resumed his reading. "The above-named, wherever they may be taken, and as soon as their identity is proved, shall be at once executed."

There was a sudden movement in the crowd, and the crier continued,—"Any one affording them shelter, or aiding their escape, will be tried by a Court Martial, and put to death. Signed——"

The silence was profound.

"Signed by the Delegate of the Committee of Public Safety, CIMOURDAIN."

"Why, he was a priest!" said a peasant.

"The late curate of Parigné," observed another.

A townsman added, "Cimourdain and Turmeau, a White priest and a Blue one."

"They are both black enough," remarked another.

The mayor on the balcony raised his cap, and cried, "Long live the Republic!"

A roll of the drum, however, gave notice that the crier had more to say, indeed he made a sign with his hand to that effect.

"Listen," said he, "to the last four lines of the Government decree. They are signed by the officer commanding the Expeditionary Column of the Northern Coast, the Commandant Gauvain."

"Go on," cried the crowd, and the crier continued, "Under penalty of death——"

All became silent.

"It is forbidden, in pursuance of the above order, to lend, aid, or give succour to the nineteen rebels, at this time enclosed, and surrounded in La Tourgue."

"Eh, what is that?" said some one. It was the voice of a woman,—the voice of the mother.

CHAPTER III.

THE MURMUR OF THE PEASANTS.

MICHELLE FLÉCHARD had mingled with the peasants. She had heard what had passed without listening to it, but at the word La Tourgue she had pricked up her ears.

"Eh," repeated she, "What is that about La Tourgue?"

All looked round at her. She had a wild appearance. She was in rags. Some voices murmured, "She looks like one of the brigands."

A peasant woman who was carrying a basket of buckwheat cakes, came up to her and whispered, "Be quiet."

Michelle Fléchard gazed stupidly at the woman. Once more she understood nothing. The name of La Tourgue had struck her like a flash of lightning, but now all was dark again. Had she no right to ask for information? What had she done that people should look at her so?

But the drum had been beaten for the last time. The bill-sticker had pasted up the proclamation on the wall of the Town Hall, the crier had gone off to some other village, and the crowd had commenced to disperse. A few peasants, however, still remained in front of the proclamation. Michelle Fléchard moved towards this group; the men composing it were commenting on the names of the outlaws.

The group was composed of citizens and peasants, that is to say, of *Blues* and *Whites*. A peasant was saying,—"That is all very well, but they have not got them all. Nineteen is only nineteen. They have not got Riou, nor Benjamin Moulins, nor Goupil of the parish of Andouillé."

"Nor Lorieul of Monjean," said another

And at once a crowd of names were added by others of the group.

"Nor Brice Denys."

"Nor François Dudonet."

"Nor the man from Laval."

"Nor Huet of Launy Villiers."

"Nor Grégis."

"Nor Pilon."

"Nor Filleul,"

"Nor Ménnicent."

"Nor Guéharrée."

"Nor the three brothers Logerais."

"Nor Mons. Lechandelier de Pierreville."

"Fools," said the severe voice of an old man with white hair; "as they have Lantenac, they have got them all."

"But they have not got *him* yet," said a younger man.

"Lantenac once taken, the soul is captured. Lantenac killed, La Vendée is slain," replied the old man.

"Who is this Lantenac?" asked a townsman.

"He is an ex-noble," answered another citizen.

"He is woman shooter," said a third.

Michelle Fléchard caught this and said, "Yes, that is true;" adding, "for he had me shot."

The expression was a strange one, it was like a living person classing herself with the dead. People began to look curiously at her.

She was not a pleasant sight, trembling with terror at everything, frightened and scared, like some wild beast in trouble. There was something terrible in the despair of a woman who knows not what to do. She looked like a being suspended on the extreme limits of destiny. But the peasant class take uncharitable views of matters, and one of them growled, "She might be a spy after all."

"Hold your tongue, and get away from here," said the friendly woman who had before spoken to her.

Michelle Fléchard answered, "I am doing no harm to anyone; I am only looking for my children."

The good-hearted woman glanced at the crowd which was staring at Michelle Fléchard, and tapping her forehead with her finger, said, "She is only a simpleton."

Then she took her on one side, and gave her one of the cakes from her basket.

Without a word of thanks Michelle Fléchard took it, and began to eat it greedily.

"She eats like a beast," said one of the peasants. "She must be an idiot."

Then the crowd melted away entirely, one going after the other.

When Michelle Fléchard had finished eating, she said to the woman, "Good, I have eaten, and now I am off to La Tourgue."

"Now the fit is coming on her again," said the woman.

"I must get to La Tourgue; show me the way."

"Never!" cried the peasant woman. "So that you may get yourself killed, is it not? Besides, I do not know it. Are you really mad? Listen to me, my poor woman; you seem worn out. Come to my house and rest yourself."

"I never rest now," said the bereaved mother.

"And her poor feet are all flayed," said the peasant woman.

Michelle Fléchard continued, "I tell you that they have stolen my children. A little girl and two boys. I come from the hiding-place under a tree in the forest. You can speak about me to Tellmarch the beggar, and the man I met in the field yonder. It was the beggar that cured me. It seemed that I had something broken in me. All these are things that really happened to me. There is Sergeant Radoub also that you can ask. He will tell you about me. For he met us all in the wood. Three! I said that I had three children. The eldest is called René Jean; I can prove all this; the next Gros-Alain, and the third Georgette. My husband is dead. They killed him. He was the farmer at Siscoignard.

"You seem to me a kind woman. Point out my road to me. I am not mad; I am only a mother; I have lost my children, and am looking for them, that is all; I do not exactly know where I have come from. I slept last night in a barn; La Tourgue, that is the place that I am going to. I am not a thief. You can see that I tell the truth. You ought to help me to find my children. I do not belong to this part. I have been shot, but I do not know where it was done."

The peasant woman shook her head. "Listen to me, you poor wayfarer," said she. "In these times of revolution you must not talk about things that you do not understand, or you will get yourself arrested."

"But La Tourgue!" cried the mother. "Madame, for the love of the Infant Saviour and the Holy Virgin of Paradise, I beg you, Madame, I entreat you, I conjure you, tell me the way to La Tourgue!"

The woman got angry. "I do not know it," cried she; "and if I did, I would not tell it to you. It is a bad place, and nobody should go there."

"For all that I will go," murmured the mother and she set off at once.

The peasant woman looked after her for a few moments, and then turned away grumbling. "The poor creature must have something to eat," said she, and running after Michelle Fléchard she put a lump of black bread in her hand. "There is something for your supper," said she. The poor mother took it without a word, and continued her route. She was making her way out of the village; as she came to the last two or three straggling cottages she met three little ragged barefooted children. She went up to them muttering. "They were like these, two boys and a girl." Then seeing that they looked eagerly at her lump of bread, she gave it to them.

The children were half frightened of her, but they took the bread.

Then she plunged into the depths of the forest.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ERROR.

However, on that very day, before sun rise, in the indistinct obscurity of the forest, on a cross-road between Javené and Lécousse, this is what took place.

All the roads through the Bocage are hollow ones, and of them all, the road from Javené to Parigné by way of Lécousse most resembles a ravine. In addition it winds very much. This road runs to Vitré, and has had the honour of jolting the carriage of Madame de Sevigné. It has a perfect wall of thick hedges on either side. No spot could be better suited for an ambuscade. On the very morning upon which Michelle Fléchard had, at another point of the forest, reached the first village where she had met the sepulchral-looking procession of the guillotine escorted by the gendarmes, there was in the thickets through which the road to Javené passes, after crossing the bridge over the Couesnon, a crowd of concealed men. The branches of the underwood afforded them a secure hiding-place. They were peasants, all wearing the *grejo*, or jackets of skin which the kings of Brittany wore in the sixth century and the peasants in the eighteenth. They were all armed, some with muskets, and others with axes. Those who had hatchets were engaged in cutting a heap of brush-wood all ready to be set fire to. Those who had guns were grouped on each side of the road as if waiting for some one or something. Any one who could have seen through the thick screen of leaves would have perceived everywhere fingers pressed upon triggers, and barrels of guns pointing through embrasures formed by the interlacing of the branches. These people were on the watch. Every gun was directed to a certain point of the road which was growing light with the coming day. In the gloom low voices could be heard, whispering to each other.

"Are you sure about it?"

"Faith, they say so."

"It is coming past here?"

"So they say in the neighbourhood."

"It must never pass here."

"It must be burnt."

"That is what we three villages have united for."

"Yes, but there is the escort."

"Well, we will kill the escort."

"But is it by this road that it will pass?"

"That is what they say."

"Then it will have come from Vitré?"

"Why not?"

"But they said it was coming from Fougères."

"Let it come from Fougères or from Vitré, it really comes from the devil."

"Certainly."

"And it must go back there."

"Yes."

"It was going to Parigné?"

"It seems so."

"It shall not go there."

"Never."

"No, no, no!"

"Pay attention."

It was well to keep silence now, for it was growing light very fast.

All at once the men in ambush held their breath as the sound of wheels and horses was heard. They peered through the branches, and saw indistinctly in the hollow way a long waggon and a mounted escort, there was something in the cart which was coming towards them.

"There it is," said the man, who appeared to be looked upon as the leader.

"Yes," answered one of the watchers, "with an escort, too."

"How many men in the escort?"

"Twelve."

"Why, they said there were twenty."

"Twelve or twenty, we will kill them all."

"Wait until they come within easy range."

In a moment afterwards, at a turn of the road, the waggon again appeared.

"Long live the King!" cried the insurgent chief.

A hundred muskets were discharged at once.

When the smoke had cleared away, seven horsemen lay on the ground, five had fled. The peasants hurried to the waggon.

"Hulloa," exclaimed one of them, "this is not a guillotine, this is a ladder."

He was right; the waggon was only loaded with a long ladder.

The two cart-horses had been struck down-wounded, the driver had been accidentally killed. "It is all the same," remarked the leader. "A ladder under escort is a suspicious thing. It was going to Parigné, no doubt, it was for the storming of La Tourgue."

"Let us burn the ladder," cried the peasants; and they burned it. As for the sepulchral car that they were in wait for, it had taken another route, and was already some two leagues away at the village where Michelle Fléchard had seen it arrive with the first beams of the rising sun.

CHAPTER V.

A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS.

MICHELLE FLÉCHARD, after quitting the children to whom she had given the bread, had walked at random through the trees. As she could find no one to show her the road, she was necessarily alone. Every now and then she sat down, then she got up, and sat down again. She was a prey to that terrible fatigue which begins in the muscles, and then penetrates the bones, a weariness such as slaves suffer from. She was in fact, a slave,—a slave to her children. It was absolutely necessary for her to find them. Every fresh delay might entail their destruction. The person who undertakes such a duty no longer is his own master. She hardly dare draw her breath. But she was tired out; and in such a state of weakness, one step more or less is a question to be seriously debated. Could she get on? She had been walking since the morning, and latterly she had come across neither a village or a house. First she took the right path, then the wrong one, and at last lost herself entirely amongst a number of cross paths, each exactly similar to the other. Was she coming to the end of her task? Was she nearing the term of her Passion? She was in the Vale of Tears, and she felt all the anguish of a last effort. Should she fall down and die upon the road? At one moment to advance another step seemed to her impossible. The sun was sinking, the forest growing dark and the pathways disappearing under the grass, and she knew not what was to become of her. God was her only refuge. She called for help, but no one answered her. She looked all around her, and at last perceived an opening in the branches; she turned abruptly in that direction, and in a few minutes found herself out of the wood.

Before her was a valley so narrow that it looked like a ditch, at the bottom of which a thin thread of water flowed over the pebbles in its bed. Then she felt that she was parched with thirst. She went to the stream, and kneeling down by it, drank greedily. Whilst she was on her knees, she took the opportunity of saying a prayer, then rising to her feet she made an effort to judge of her position. She stepped across the brook. Beyond, the little valley extended until, beyond the range of vision, was a plateau covered with thick underwood, which, starting from the brook, ascended in an inclined plane, and stretched away to the horizon.

The forest had been a solitude, the plain was a desert. From behind every bush in the forest some one might have sprung upon her. On the plain as far as her eye could reach nothing met her gaze. All that she could see were a few frightened birds flying over the heath. In the face of this terrible solitude, the unhappy mother felt her knees bend under her; she felt that her senses were leaving her, and making a last effort, the deserted plain rang with her strange cry, "Is there anyone here?"

She waited for the answer, and it came. A deep voice burst on the evening air. This voice came from the distant horizon, and was repeated by a thousand echoes, until it swelled into a sound like a thunderclap, and this voice answered the question of the mother with a tremendous "*Yes!*"

It was the voice of the cannon.

Then a deep silence fell on all around.

The mother drew herself up, her spirits seemed to rise. There was some one about then. There was some one to whom she could speak. She had drunk and prayed, and she proceeded to ascend the slope from the other side of which she had heard the distant report. All at once on the verge of the horizon she saw a lofty tower. This tower stood up in soli-

tary grandeur in this wild landscape, glowing purple in the shade of the sinking sun. She was more than a league from it. Behind the tower, fading away in the mist, was a huge bank of verdure. It was the Forest of Fougères. This tower was in the same quarter of the horizon from which the sound she had heard appeared to have come. Was it a summons? Was it from the tower that the sound had come? Michelle Fléchard had now reached the top of the slope, and there was nothing before her but the plain.

She walked on towards the tower.

CHAPTER VI.

THE POSITION.

THE moment had arrived.

The inexorable was grasping the merciless.

Cimourdain had Lantenac in his power.

The old Royalist rebel was taken in his form.

It was evident that he could not escape, and Cimourdain had determined that the marquis should be guillotined at his own home, at his very door, on his lands, and, to a certain extent, in his very house, so that the ancestral mansion might see the head of the feudal nobleman fall, and that the example might be a memorable one.

That is why he had sent to Fougères for the guillotine which we have seen upon its road. To kill Lantenac, was to kill La Vendée; to kill La Vendée was to save France. Cimourdain did not hesitate for a moment. This man had satisfied himself, however cruel the duty was, it was a duty that he had to perform.

The marquis seemed lost, on that point Cimourdain's mind was at rest; but on the other he was very uneasy. The struggle would be a fierce one. Gauvain would direct operations himself, and would perhaps insist on mingling in the fray. There was the true soldier spirit in this young chief, and he was just the man to fling himself into this hand-to-hand encounter; he hoped that he might not be killed. Gauvain! his child! the only loving tie that bound him to earth. Gauvain had been most fortunate up to the present, but fortune grows weary at last of protecting its favourites; Cimourdain trembled for him. His destiny was a strange one—he stood between two Gauvains, for one of whom he desired death, and for the other life.

The cannon shot that had aroused Georgette from her slumbers, and called the mother from the depths of the forests, had done more than that. Whether by chance, or whether by the design of the gunner who trained the piece, the ball which should only have been a shot of warning, had torn down and half destroyed the grating of iron bars that protected the embrasure on the first floor of the tower, and the besieged had had no time to repair the damage.

The garrison had been rather boastful, for they were very short of ammunition; their position was indeed much more critical than the besiegers supposed. Had they had sufficient powder they would have blown up the tower of La Tourgue, including themselves and their enemies; that was their dream, but their stores were nearly exhausted. Each man had scarcely thirty rounds to fire. They had loaded every weapon so as to keep up a continual fire, but for how long could this fire last, though they had plenty of guns, pistols, and blunderbusses?

They must keep it up steadily, and yet economise it. Fortunately—a sinister kind of good fortune—the fight would soon be a hand-to-hand one, man to man, and steel to steel, a duel with sabre and dagger. It would be a fight with knives rather than a battle with guns. They would come to blows at close quarters very soon; in this lay the hopes of the besieged.

The interior of the tower seemed impregnable. In the lower room into which the breach opened, was the shelter,—that kind of barricade so scientifically erected by Lantenac, which defended the entrance. In rear of it was a long table covered with loaded weapons, carbines, muskets, and blunderbusses, also axes, swords, and daggers; not having been able to use the crypt as a mine by which they could blow up the tower, the marquis had closed the doors of the dungeon. Above the ground floor, was the round chamber, which was

ıly accessible by the winding staircase. his chamber, in which was also placed table covered with loaded fire-arms ready hand, derived its light from the loop- ıle, protected by the iron grating which ıd been destroyed by the last cannon ıot. From this the room on the second ›or was gained by a spiral staircase, and this was the iron door giving ingress the building on the bridge. This ıamber had two names. Sometimes it ıs called the "Room with the Iron oor," at others "The Hall of Mirrors," ›m a number of small looking glasses ıng from rusty hooks driven into the ıre walls, a strange mixture of elegance ıd rudeness. As the rooms on the upper ›or could not be defended with any hope success, this Hall of Mirrors became ıat Maunesson Mallet, an authority on rtified places, calls, "the last post where e besieged can offer terms of capitula- ›n." The business of the besieged was keep their assailants from entering this ›om.

This circular chamber on the second ›or was lighted by loopholes, but for all at a torch was burning there. This rch placed in a iron socket like the one the lower room, had been lighted by nânus, who had placed by its side the ıd of the sulphur match. A hideous ecaution. At the end of the ground ›or room, was a table on trestles, which ›ld provisions like a repast in a Homeric ıve,—great dishes of rice, of *fur*, a kind porridge made of black wheat, *Godni- lle*, which is a Breton way of hashing ›al, dishes of hotch-potch, wheaten cakes, ewed fruit, and pots of cider. Anyone ho liked could help himself to food and ›ink.

The cannon-shot put them all on the ert. Only half an hour was before them. rom the summit of the tower Imânus kept ı eye on the approach of the assailants. antenac had ordered his men not to fire n the stormers as they advanced to the ›tack. "They are four thousand five undred," said he. "To kill them outside useless. Kill them inside; once inside e are more on an equality with them." hen with a bitter sneer he added, *Equality and fraternity!*"

It had been settled that when the enemy made a forward movement, Imânus should blow a warning note on the horn.

All waited in silence behind their shelter, or on the steps of the staircase, grasping a musket with one hand, and their beads with the other.

This was the situation of affairs; the stormers had a breach to clamber up, a barricade to carry, three rooms, one above the other, to capture by sheer fighting, two winding staircases to be forced, step by step, under a hail of bullets; as for the besieged they had nothing to do but to die.

CHAPTER VII.

PRELIMINARIES.

GAUVAIN, on his part, had given orders for the attack. He gave his last instructions to Cimourdain, who, it may be remembered, was without, taking an active part to guard the plateau, and to Guéchamp, who was to remain in reserve with the larger portion of the army in the camp in the Forest. It had been arranged that neither the masked battery in the wood nor the battery on the plateau should fire, unless the garrison made a sally, or endeavoured in any way to escape. Gauvain had kept for himself the command of the stormers. And this gave Cimourdain great uneasiness.

The sun had just set.

A tower in the midst of a plain resembles a ship in the open sea. It can be attacked in the same fashion. It is a matter of boarding rather than a bombardment. No cannon, no useless attempts. What use is there in firing at walls fifteen feet thick? A post forced on the one side, and defended on the other; axes, knives, pistols, fists and teeth,—that is the way to do it.

Gauvain felt that this was the only way in which he could carry La Tourgue. Nothing can be more deadly than a fight at such close quarters that the combatants can see the whites of each others' eyes. He knew the internal strength of the tower; for had he not lived in it as a child?

He meditated deeply on the subject.

A few paces from him stood his lieutenant Guéchamp with a telescope to his eyes examining the country on the side of Parigné. All of a sudden Guéchamp said, "At last!"

This exclamation roused Gauvais from his reverie.

"What is it, Guéchamp?"

"My Commandant, here is the ladder."

"The escape ladder?"

"Yes."

"What, have we not got it yet?"

"No, Commandant, and I was getting quite uneasy about it, for the messenger that I had sent to Javené had returned."

"I know that."

"He told me that he had found, at the carpenter's shop, a ladder of the length required, that he had requisitioned it, and had had it placed on a cart; that he had further obtained an escort of twelve troopers, and that he had seen the cart, ladder, and escort started off for Parigné, and that then he had returned here at full speed."

"Yes, and when he made his report, he said that the cart was well horsed, and having left at two in the morning would arrive here by sunset. I know all that. Well, what further?"

"Well, Commandant, the sun is setting now, and the cart which is bringing the ladder has not yet arrived."

"Is it possible? Well, for all that we must attack. The hour has come. If we delay, the besieged will think that we are drawing back."

"Commandant, we can attack."

"But the safety ladder is necessary."

"Doubtless it is."

"But we have not got it."

"We have it."

"How is that?"

"It was that which made me say, 'Ah, at last!' The waggon did not arrive; I took my glass, and swept the road from Parigné to La Tourgue, and, Commandant, I am delighted, the waggon and the escort are coming down the hill; you can see them."

Gauvain took the glass and looked. "You are right, there it is. There is not enough day left to see very clearly, but I can make out the escort; it is certainly the ladder. Only, Guéchamp, the escort seems to be more numerous than you tol me."

"It seems so to me too."

"They are about a quarter of a leagu off."

"Commandant, the escape ladder wi be here in a quarter of an hour."

"We can attack then at once."

It was certainly a waggon which the saw approaching, but not the one whic they were expecting.

As Gauvain turned, he saw behind hi Sergeant Radoub, standing erect, his eye on the ground, and giving the salut "What is it, Sergeant Radoub?"

"Citizen Commandant, we, the soldie of the Regiment of the Red Cap, have favour to ask you."

"What is it?"

"To let us get killed."

"Indeed," answered Gauvain,

"Will you have that kindness?"

"But that depends on circumstances, said Gauvain.

"Look here, Commandant, since th affair at Dol, you have been too careful us, and there are twelve of us remaining.

"Well?"

"That is humiliating to us."

"You form the reserve."

"We had rather be the advance guard.

"But I have need of you to decide th day at the close of the action, and it is fo this reason that I keep you back."

"Too much so."

"I can't help that; you are in the mai body, and march with it."

"In the rear; but Parisian regiment have the right to march at the head."

"I will think over the matter, Sergean Radoub."

"Think of it to-day, Commandan whilst there is a chance; there will b hard blows to be exchanged. It will b rough work. La Tourgue will burn th fingers of those who touch it. We as the favour of making one with those wh are there."

The sergeant paused, gave his mous tache a twist, and continued in a broke voice, "Besides, just see here, Command ant; our babies are in this tower, our chil dren are there, the adopted children of th regiment. That frightful beast they cal 'Break the *Blues*,' and Imânus, thi

Gouge le Bruant, this thunder of God, a spawn of the devil, threatens our children. Our children, our little mites, Commandant. If earthquakes were to join in this business we cannot permit any misfortune to happen to them. Do you understand that? We do not wish it. A short time ago I took advantage of the truce, and mounting the plateau saw them through a window. Yes, they are there for sure. You can see them through the window from the edge of the ravine; I saw them, but the little loves were afraid of me. My Commandant, if a single hair of their head is injured, I swear to you, by a thousand names of everything sacred, that I, Sergeant Radoub, will take revenge out of some one's carcass, be he who he may. And the whole of the regiment say the same. We either want the babies saved, or we wish to be all of us killed. It is our right. *Ventraboumine!* Yes, all killed, and so, Commandant, my respects to you."

Gauvain extended his hand to Radoub, and said,

"You are all brave men. You shall join the stormers. I will divide you into two parties. I will put six of you in the van so that the men will be well led, and six in the rear, so that no one can retreat."

"Shall I as usual command the twelve?"

"Assuredly."

"Then thanks, Commandant, I am off to join the vanguard."

Radoub saluted, and went back to his place in the ranks. Gauvain looked at his watch, whispered a few words to Guéchamp, and the attacking force began to form.

CHAPTER VIII.

CIMOURDAIN'S OFFER.

AT this moment Cimourdain who had not yet taken up his position, approached a trumpeter, who stood by Gauvain's side, and said, "Sound."

The trumpet sounded, the horn replied once more.

"What does this mean, Guéchamp?" asked Gauvain. "What does Cimourdain want?"

Cimourdain moved towards the tower holding up a white handkerchief, raised his voice and spoke. "Do you know me, you men in the tower?"

A voice, the voice of Imânus, answered from the summit, "Yes!"

A dialogue then ensued audible to the bystanders.

"I am the envoy of the Republic."

"You are the ex-priest of Parigné."

"I am the Delegate of the Committee of Public Safety."

"You are a priest!"

"I am the Representation of the Law."

"You are a renegade."

"I am the Commissioner of the Revolution."

"You are an apostate!"

"I am Cimourdain."

"You are a devil!"

"Do you know me?"

"We hate you."

"Would you be pleased to hold me in your power?"

"There are eighteen of us here who would give our heads for yours."

"Very well, I have come to give myself up to you!"

A burst of cruel laughter floated down from the summit of the tower accompanied by the cry, "Come then!"

There was throughout the camp a silence of breathless interest, as Cimourdain resumed the parley.

"On one condition!"

"What?"

"Listen!"

"Speak!"

"You hate me."

"We do."

"And *I* love you, I am your brother."

A voice from the top of the tower replied, "Yes, our brother Cain."

"Insult me, but listen," answered Cimourdain, in tones at once strange and sweet. "I have come here under the safeguard of a flag of truce. Yes, you are my brothers, you are poor misguided men. I am your friend. I am light speaking to ignorance. Light is ever brotherhood. Besides, have we not a common mother, our country? Well, listen to me. You will in the future know,

or your children will know, or your children's children will know, that what is being done now is the result of a command from on High, that the Revolution is God's choicest work. Whilst waiting for the time when all understandings, even yours, will comprehend, when all prejudices, even yours, will vanish away, waiting until the great light shall shed its beams upon you, shall no one have pity on your darkness? I come to you, I offer you my head; nay, more, I stretch out my hand. I ask you to slay me, that you may save yourselves. I have full power, and that which I say, I can do. This is a last moment; I make one final effort. Yes, he who addresses you is a citizen, and in that citizen is a priest; the citizen strives with you, but the priest entreats. Listen to me! Many amongst you have wives and children. I am taking up the defence of your wives and children, defending them, aye, against yourselves. Ah! my brothers——"

"Go and preach, priest," sneered Imânus.

Cimourdain continued,—"My brothers, do not let the fatal hour strike. There will be carnage and slaughter; many of those who are here to-day will never see to-morrow's sun rise. Yes, many of us will perish, and you, all of you, are going to die. Show mercy to yourselves. Why uselessly shed all this blood? Why kill so many, when the lives of two will suffice?"

"Two?" repeated Imânus.

"Yes, two."

"Who?"

"Lantenac and I." Once more he raised his voice. "There are two men too many here,—Lantenac for us, I for you. This is what I offer you, and you will all have your lives saved. Give *us* Lantenac, and take me. Lantenac will be guillotined, and you shall do what you like with me."

"Priest," roared Imânus, "if we had you, we would roast you at a slow fire."

"I agree," said Cimourdain, and went on, "You who are condemned to death in this tower, can in an hour be free and living. I bring safety to you; will you accept it?"

Imânus burst out, "You are not only a scoundrel, but a madman. Why do you come here to disturb us? Who asked you to come and speak to us? *We*, give up our lord! What more do you want, pray?"

"His head, and I offer——"

"Your skin! Ah, Priest Cimourdain! we would flay you like a dog. Well, we refuse; your skin is not worth his head, so be off with you."

"This is too awful. For the last time, reflect."

Night crept on whilst these threatening words were exchanged which could be heard both within and without the tower. The Marquis de Lantenac kept silence and allowed others to act for him. Leaders have their feelings of sinister egotism. It is one of the rights of responsibility.

Imânus ceased speaking to Cimourdain, and shouted to the troops behind him,—

"Men, who are about to attack us! We have made our proposals to you, and they will not be changed. Will you accept them? If not, woe to all. Do you consent? We will give up the three children who are there, if you give us all the right of life and exit."

"To all of you," answered Cimourdain, "except to one."

"And that one?"

"Is Lantenac."

"Our lord! give up our lord? never!"

"We must have Lantenac."

"Never!"

"We can only treat with you on that condition."

"Then commence."

Silence reigned.

Imânus, after having sounded the signal of warning on his horn, descended the staircase. The marquis took his sword in his hand. The nineteen placed themselves in silence behind their shelter in the tower hall, and then fell upon their knees. They could hear the steady tramp of the column as it advanced to the attack of the tower through the gloom.

The sound grew clearer. Suddenly it came close to them, at the entrance to the breach. Then the kneeling garrison took aim with their muskets and blunderbusses through the loopholes of the barricade, and one of them, Grand Francœur, who was the Priest Turmeau, rose to his feet,

a naked sabre in one hand, and a crucifix in the other, and said in a solemn voice, 'In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

All fired at the same time, and the battle began.

CHAPTER IX.

TITANS AGAINST GIANTS.

It was indeed terrible.

The hand-to-hand fight surpassed all that could have been imagined. To find anything that could bear comparison to it we must go back to the great duels of Æschylus, or to the old feudal butcheries, "*the attacks with short arms*," which lasted down to the seventeenth century, when soldiers penetrated into strongholds by false breaches, fatal assaults; where, says the old sergeant of Alentejo, the mines having done their work, the besiegers advanced, bearing boards covered with sheets of tin, furnished with rondelets and mantlets, and equipped with hand grenades, and forced the besieged to abandon their entrenchments or shelter trenches, and thus gaining ground they vigorously pushed the garrison back.

The point of attack was frightful; it was one of those breaches called in technical language "*a covered breach*," that is, a fissure passing through a wall from one side to the other, and not an open breach in the wall, with the sky above it. The powder had acted like an auger, and its effect was so violent that the tower had been cracked for more than forty feet above the mine; but this was only a crack, and the practicable aperture that served as a breach, and gave an entrance into the tower chamber, was more like a perforation made by a lance than a piece cut out by an axe. It was a puncture in the flank of the tower, a long penetrating fracture, something like a well laid on its side, a winding passage, mounting like an intestine through a wall fifteen feet in thickness; a hideous misshapen cylinder filled with all kinds of indescribable obstacles, where you struck your head against the granite, and your feet against the rubbish, before your eyes became accustomed to the darkness. In front of the assailants was a black and gloomy arch like the mouth of a gulf, which had for its upper and lower jaws all the stones of the demolished walls; the mouth of a shark has not more teeth than this frightful opening. It was necessary to enter this gulf and then to get out of it. Within it crashed the volleys, without rose the shelter; when we say *without*, we mean in the hall on the ground floor.

The conflicts of the sappers in covered galleries when the countermine succeeds in cutting the mine, below decks in a vessel carried by boarding in a naval engagement, could alone equal this for its savage ferocity. A fight in the bottom of a grave is the very acme of horror. The thunder of the assailants answered to the thunder in ambuscade; explosion replied to explosion. First came Gauvain's shout of "Break through them!" then Lantenac's cry, "Keep firm front against them!" then the yell of Imânus, "Rally, men of Maine!" The clash of sword against sword, blow against blow, frightful discharges killing all around. The torch fastened to the wall showed dimly this scene of unutterable horror. It was impossible to distinguish anything clearly. All was black smoke tinged with a bloodstained hue. Anyone entering this Pandemonium became suddenly deaf and blind; deaf with the din, blind with the smoke. Disabled men lay helpless amongst the ruins. They trampled on the dead, they trod on bleeding wounds, and crushed broken limbs. Shrieks and yells rose up from the ground. Men had their feet bitten by dying men, and at intervals there were silences more terrible than the noise itself. They grappled with each other; there were sounds of suppressed breathing, then gnashing of teeth, oaths, and death rattles, and then once more the thunder would commence. A river of blood flowed from the tower through the breach and was lost in the darkness of the night. It seemed as if the tower itself was bleeding like a wounded giant.

And yet, what was most wonderful, but little noise was heard without. The night was very dark, and in both forest and plain around the assaulted fortress, a species of funereal peace reigned. Within was a

hell; outside was a tomb. This onset of combatants tearing each other to pieces in the darkness, these crashing volleys of musketry, these yells, these fierce passions, —all this din was deadened by the thickness of the walls and arches. Air was wanting to carry the sound, and to slaughter was added the horrors of suffocation. Beyond the tower but little could be heard. The children slept through it all. The butchery went on; the garrison continued to hold their shelter; nothing could have been harder than the attempt to force this barricade with a re-entering angle. If the odds in numbers were against the besieged, they had the advantage in position. The attacking column lost many men. Formed in file outside the tower, it forced its way slowly into the breach, like a snake twisting its way into its hole.

Gauvain, with all the usual rashness of a young leader, had thrust himself into the lower room, into the thickest part of the combat, with bullets whistling around him on every side. He had all the confidence of a man who had never yet received a wound. As he turned round to give an order, the blaze of musketry showed him the face of a man close beside him. "Cimourdain!" cried he. "What are you doing here?"

It was indeed Cimourdain, and Cimourdain replied, "I come to be near you."

"But you will get yourself killed."

"And pray what are you doing?"

"It is necessary that I should be here, but it is different with you."

"Since you are here, I must be here too."

"No, master."

"Yes, my child," and Cimourdain remained resolutely close at Gauvain's side.

The ground of the hall commenced to be heaped with corpses.

Although the shelter had not yet been carried, it was evident that numbers must prevail in the end. The stormers were in the open, and the defenders under cover. For one defender that fell, ten assailants perished, but fresh reliefs poured in to recruit the ranks of the latter. The stormers increased in numbers, as the defenders diminished. The whole garrison of nineteen was behind the shelter. The tide of battle was there. There were dead and wounded amongst them. Fifteen men were still fit for action. One of the most ferocious of them, Chante en Hiver, had been frightfully mutilated. He was a short thick-set Breton, covered with hair, and very active; he had lost an eye, and had his jaw broken; he could no longer keep his feet, and dragged himself up the winding staircase to the upper chamber, hoping to be able there to pray, and die in peace. He was leaning against the wall near the embrasure trying to get a little fresh air.

Below, the carnage at the barricade became more and more terrible. In a pause between the destructive volleys of musketry, the voice of Cimourdain was again heard. "Besieged!" cried he, "why continue this unnecessary bloodshed? You must be beaten. Surrender! Remember that we are four thousand five hundred against nineteen, that is more than two hundred to one. Surrender then."

"Brain that driveller," shouted the Marquis de Lantenac, and twenty bullets answered Cimourdain's speech.

The barricade did not reach to the roof of the vault, which permitted the besieged to fire over it, but it also gave the besiegers the chance of carrying it by escalade.

"Let us storm the barricade," cried Gauvain. "Will anyone volunteer?"

"I will," answered Sergeant Radoub.

CHAPTER X.

RADOUB.

At this moment a kind of stupor fell upon the assailants. Radoub had entered by the breach at the head of the stormers, he, and his six men of the Parisian Regiment; and out of these six, four had already fallen. After he had responded, "I will," he bent down, doubled himself up, and crawled between the legs of the combatants to the entrance of the breach, which they saw him leave. Was this a flight? Could so brave a man fly? What did it mean?

Arrived on the outside Radoub rubbed his eyes, half blinded by the smoke, as

hough he wished to wipe out the horrors f the night, and by the light of the stars azed on the wall of the tower. Then he ave a satisfied nod of his head, as much s to say, "I was not deceived after all." Radoub had noticed that the deep crack aused by the explosion of the mine, eached from the top of the breach to hat embrasure on the first story, where a annon ball had shattered and half dis-odged the iron grating. The network of roken bars hung down, partially torn way, and a man could enter by that assage.

Yes, a man could pass by that way, but ould he get to it? Yes. He could climb he fissure if he were as active as a cat. And Radoub was almost that; he was of he race that Pindar describes, combining trength with agility; one may be an old oldier, and a young man. Radoub who ad been in the French guards, was as ctive as Hercules. He placed his musket n the ground, took off his coat and vest, nd only retained the pistols in a belt ound his waist, and his naked sabre, which e grasped between his teeth. The butts f his pistols projected above the belt. Thus freed from all encumbrances, he en-leavoured in the darkness to follow with is eyes the movements of those men of he attacking column who had not yet ntered the breach; then he began to limb up the irregularities in the stones at he edge of the fissure, which formed a ough sort of staircase. He found the dvantage of having no shoes on. The are foot is handy in climbing; he dug his oes into the crevices of the stones; he lung with his fingers and gripped with is knees. The ascent was a hard task. t was like climbing the teeth of a huge aw. "Lucky for me," thought he, "that here is no one in the room upstairs, or hey wouldn't let me climb up like this." He had fully forty feet to scramble up in his fashion. As he ascended he was a ittle hampered by the projecting butts of is pistols, the crack became narrower, and the progression more difficult. The risk of a fall became greater the higher he ascended. At length he reached the frame of the embrasure, and thrusting on one side the shattered grating, he had space to pass through. He raised himself up with a tremendous effort, and got his knee on the sill, seized with one hand a bar to the right, and with the other one to his left, and raising half his body to the height of the loophole, he hung by his two hands, with his sword between his teeth, suspended over the precipice. He had only one more step to make to enter the chamber, when a face appeared at the loophole.

Suddenly Radoub saw before him a terrible object in the shade, a face with an eye torn out, a broken jaw, and features concealed behind a mask of gore. This hideous mask glared at him with its one remaining eye. But it had two hands, and emerging from the shade towards Radoub, one of them tore the pistols from his belt, and the other wrenched the sabre from between his teeth. Radoub was disarmed, his knee slipped on the sloping plane of the sill, his hands still clung to the grating which was hardly strong enough to support his weight, and beneath him was a fall of forty feet. The gory mask and the hands belonged to Chante en Hiver, who, suffocated by the smoke, had contrived to push himself into the embrasure. The coolness of the outer air had dried the flowing blood, and given him back a little of his strength. All at once he had seen the figure of Radoub rise before the loophole, and then it was that the sergeant having his hands fixed firmly to the bars, and having the choice before him of letting go and falling, or being disarmed, had allowed the terrible Chante en Hiver to quietly denude him of his sabre and pistols. An unheard-of duel now began, a duel between a disarmed man and a wounded one. The dying man had the victory in his own hands. One pistol shot would hurl Radoub into the yawning gulf below.

Fortunately for Radoub, Chante en Hiver held both pistols in one hand, so that he could not make use of either of them; he was therefore compelled to resort to the sabre, and drove the point of it into Radoub's shoulder. Radoub was wounded, but the wound saved his life. The sergeant was unarmed, but in full vigour. Heedless of the thrust which had only inflicted a flesh wound, he swung his body upwards, and forced himself through the loophole.

There he was at once met face to face by Chante en Hiver, who had cast aside the sword, and now grasped a pistol in each hand. Chante en Hiver had Radoub at point blank range; he sank on his knee to take aim, but his trembling hand prevented his firing for the moment.

Radoub took advantage of this delay to burst out laughing. "I say, Ugly Mug," cried he; "do you expect to frighten me with your face like a bit of raw beef? *Sapristi*, how they have knocked you about!"

Chante en Hiver still took aim at him.

"It may be rude to remark, but the bullets have specked your face very prettily. My poor fellow, Bellona has smashed you up neatly. Come now, spit out that little pistol bullet, my good fellow."

The pistol was fired, and the aim was so true, that the bullet carried away half of Radoub's ear. Chante en Hiver raised the hand which held the second pistol, but Radoub did not give him time to take aim. "It is enough to have lost an ear," cried he. "You have wounded me twice, now the game is mine." As he spoke, he rushed upon Chante en Hiver and struck up his arm; the pistol exploded, and the bullet passed high above his head: then he seized him by his broken jaw, which he shook violently. Chante en Hiver uttered a yell of agony and fell fainting on the ground.

Radoub stepped over the body, which he left lying in the embrasure. "Now I have let you know my ultimatun," said he; "do not move a step. Remain there, you miserable earth crawler. Do you think that I am going to bother myself by finishing you? Creep about as you like, citizen, under the soles of my feet. Die! you have always that course open to you. Soon you will know that your priest only talked rot to you. Go, clown, and find out the great mystery," and as he spoke, he advanced into the room. "One cannot see an inch before one," growled he. Chante en Hiver struggled convulsively on the floor, and groaned in his last agony. Radoub turned round on him. "Silence! do me the pleasure of being quiet, citizen, though you do not know the meaning of the word. I am not interfering with you. I would scorn to make an end of you, so pray leave me in peace."

Then he stood watching Chante en Hiver, passing his hands through his hair. "And what am I going to do now that I am here? It is all very well, but I am disarmed. I had two shots to fire, and you, you animal, have wasted them! and in addition there is enough smoke to make a dog blind." Just then his fingers touched his wounded ear. "Ah," said he, "that hurts." Then he continued. "Yes, you have made great progress by having robbed me of an ear, but still you might have done much worse; I shall miss that less than other things, for, after all, it was only an ornament; and you have scratched my shoulder too, but that is a mere nothing. So die, you clodhopper, I pardon you."

He stopped to listen. The noise in the lower room was louder than ever. The combat was evidently being carried on with all its first vigour. "They are going it below, they are howling, 'Long live the King,' and dying game."

His foot struck against his sabre which lay on the ground; he picked it up, and said to Chante en Hiver, who showed no sign of life, and was perhaps dead, "Do you see, my man of the woods? For what I can do, my sabre is as good as nothing; however I take it up for old acquaintance' sake. But I wanted my pistols. The devil fly away with you, you savage! Ah! what am I to do, I am of no earthly use here?" He moved further into the chamber endeavouring to see and to find out the geography of the place; all at once, in the dim light, behind the central pillar, he saw a long table, and on it something shining. He touched it. It was a whole array of fire-arms, blunderbusses, pistols, and muskets, placed in proper order, and apparently only waiting for the hands to make use of them. It was the reserve prepared by the besieged for their second stand when they were driven from the lower chamber. It was a regular arsenal. "A perfect sideboard," exclaimed Radoub. Frenzied with delight he threw himself upon them. Now he was again a formidable adversary. The door of the staircase which led to the upper and lower floors was visible, it stood

wide open by the side of the table on which were the fire-arms. Radoub dropped his sabre, and seized two double-barrelled pistols, which he discharged at random through the doorway and down the staircase; then he seized on a blunderbuss loaded to the muzzle with buckshot, and fired it in the same direction. The blunderbuss vomiting its fifteen small bullets, seemed like a discharge of grape. Then Radoub taking breath, shouted down the staircase, in a voice of thunder, "Long live Paris!" Then arming himself with a blunderbuss, larger than the last he pointed it down the staircase and waited. The confusion in the lower room was indescribable. This unexpected surprise disorganised the defence. Two shots out of Radoub's triple discharge had told; one bullet had killed the eldest of the brothers Pique en Bois, and another Houzard, who was Mons. de Quélen, "They are in the floor above," cried the marquis. This shout settled the abandonment of the barricade; a flock of birds could not have fled quicker, and a rush was made to see who could reach the staircase first. The marquis urged on this retreat. "Quick, quick," he shouted. "The truest courage is now shown in escaping. Let us get to the second floor. There we can begin afresh." He was the last man to leave the barricade. This act of bravery saved his life. Radoub had taken up his post on the first step of the staircase, his finger on the trigger of his blunderbuss. The two men who made their appearance received the discharge full in their faces, and fell as if struck by a thunderbolt. Had the marquis been with them he would certainly have been slain. Before Radoub could grasp another weapon, they flew past him, the marquis the last of all, and moving leisurely. Believing the room to be full of the enemy, they did not attempt to stop, but hastened on to gain the room on the second floor, the Hall of Mirrors. In this room was the iron door, and the sulphur match. Here they must either surrender or die!

Gauvain was as much surprised as the garrison at the firing, and could not understand from whence this unlooked-for aid had come; but without seeking to do so, he profited by it, and springing with his men over the barricade, followed the enemy closely to the first floor.

There he found Radoub.

The sergeant saluted, and said, "One minute, Commandant, this is my doing. I remembered Dol, and took a leaf out of your book, by placing the enemy between two fires."

"You are a first-rate pupil," answered Gauvain with a smile.

After having been for a certain time in darkness, the eyes become accustomed to it, like those of night birds. Gauvain saw that Radoub was covered with blood.

"But, comrade, you are wounded!"

"Pay no attention to that, Commandant. What is an ear more or less? I have also got a sabre thrust, but I despise it. When you break a window, you are bound to cut your fingers; after all, what are a few drops of blood?"

They made a sort of halt in the room on the first floor, which had been won by Radoub. Some one brought up a lantern; Cimourdain rejoined Gauvain, and they deliberated together. Indeed the situation was a serious one. They were not in the secrets of the garrison, and did not know how scarce powder was with them. The second stage was the last point to be defended, and the stormers did not know whether the staircase had not been mined. One thing was certain, and that was, that the besieged could not escape. Those who had not been killed were there with their leader. Lantenac was in a trap. With this certainty, they could afford to take a little rest, and search for the best means to bring the affair to a close. They had already lost a number of men, and they wished not to risk another heavy loss in the second assault. The danger in this last attack would be very great. There would probably be a heavy fire to encounter.

The fight ceased. The besiegers, masters of the ground floor, and of the floor above awaited the command of their leader to resume it. Gauvain and Cimourdain consulted, and Radoub in silence assisted at their deliberations. He risked a timid salute.

"What is it, Radoub?"

"Do I deserve a little reward?"

"Certainly, ask what you will."

"I ask then permission to be first in the attack."

They could not refuse his request; besides, had they done so, he would have gone first all the same.

CHAPTER XI.

DESPERATE MEN.

WHILST they were deliberating on the first floor, they were barricading themselves on the second. Success is a fury, defeat a madness. The two storys were going to dash against each other in the most frantic combat. To nearly gain a victory is an intoxication. Below, there was hope, which would be the most powerful of human passions, if there was no such thing as despair.

Despair reigned in the floor above, calm, cold despair. On arriving at this refuge, beyond which there was no shelter for them, the first care of the besieged was to block up the entrance. There was no use in shutting the door; to hamper the ascent of the stairs was a better thing to do. In such a case, an obstacle through which you can see, and over which you can shoot, is worth much more than a closed door. The torch placed by Imânus in the iron socket, near the sulphur match, lighted the room. In the chamber was one of those large, unwieldy, oaken chests, in which clothes and linen used to be kept, before the invention of wardrobes and drawers. They dragged out this chest from its place, and put it up on end in the doorway, fixing it there firmly so that it closed the entrance. They only left a narrow space open, sufficient to let one man pass at a time, an excellent mode of killing their assailants one by one. It was doubtful if any one would risk it. The ingress thus blocked up gave them a respite. They had counted on this. The nineteen were now reduced to seven, of whom one was Imânus. With the exception of Imânus and the marquis, all were wounded. The five who were wounded, (though still able to fight, for unless a man is mortally wounded, the excitement of the battle allows him to move about freely) were Chatenay, called Robi, Guinoiseau, Hoisnard, Branche d'Or, Brin d'Amour, and Grand Francœur. All the others were dead. They had no more ammunition, the pouches were empty. They counted their cartridges. How many rounds had these seven to fire amongst them? Four! They had come to the time when there was nothing left for them but to die. They had arrived at the edge of a precipice yawning and terrible. They could not be nearer the brink than they were now.

But the attack was about to commence again, more slowly, but alas! more surely. The sound of the butt ends of the besiegers, muskets could be heard, as they felt their way up the stairs. There were no means of escape. By the library? There were six guns in position on the plateau, waiting for them there with lighted portfires. By the upper rooms? No good there, for they only led to the platform at the summit. There, certainly, they had the option of casting themselves down to the base of the tower. The seven survivors of this band of heroes saw themselves shut up inexorably, clasped tightly within the embraces of those massive walls, which at once protected them and held them captive. The marquis at last addressed them, "My friends," said he, "all is over." Then, after a moment's pause, he added, "Grand Francœur, become once more the Abbé Turmeau." All knelt before the priest, their beads in their hands. The sound of their enemies' approach drew nearer. Grand Francœur, who was bleeding from the wound which a bullet had made in grazing his skull, and whose leather cap had been torn away from it, raised the crucifix in his right hand. The marquis, who was an unbeliever at heart, knelt with the others.

"Let each confess his faults in an audible voice," said Grand Francœur. "Speak, my lord."

The marquis replied, "I have killed."

"I have killed," said Hoisnard.

"I have killed," said Guinoiseau.

"I have killed," said Brin d'Amour.

"I have killed," said Chatenay.

"I have killed," said Imânus.

Then Grand Francœur answered, "I absolve you in the name of the most Holy Trinity. Let your souls be at rest."

"So be it," answered every voice.

The marquis rose to his feet. "And now," said he, "let us die!"

"And let us make others die," said Imânus.

The blows of the butt ends of the muskets were now heard against the chest that barred the doorway.

"Raise your thoughts to heaven," said the priest, "for things of earth exist for you no longer."

"Yes," answered the marquis, "we are at the gate of the tomb." All bent their heads and struck their breasts. Their eyes were fixed on the ground; the priest prayed, the peasants prayed, the marquis reflected. The chest, as though beaten by sledge hammers, gave forth a melancholy sound.

At that moment, a loud clear voice burst forth suddenly from behind them. "My lord marquis, I told you that I was right."

Every head was turned round in surprise.

An opening appeared in the wall.

A stone which had been apparently firmly joined to the others, but having a pivot above, and a pivot below, swung round on itself, and disclosed an opening in the wall. The stone had revolved on its own axis, and disclosed a passage on each side of it, one on the right, and the other on the left, rather narrow, but sufficiently wide to allow a man to pass. Through this unexpected opening, the first steps of a spiral staircase could be seen. The face of a man appeared in the opening.

The marquis recognised Halmalo.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRESERVER.

"It is you, then, Halmalo?"

"It is, my lord. You see that turning stones do exist, and that you can escape from here. I have come, I am in time, but be quick, in ten minutes you shall be in the heart of the forest."

"God is great," said the priest.

"Save yourself, my lord," cried every voice.

"First of all, my comrades," answered the marquis.

"Go first, my lord," said the Abbé Turmeau."

"I shall go last, no strife in generosity," said the marquis in a tone of severe command. "We have no time for magnanimity. You are all wounded. I order you to live, and to take to flight at once. Quick! profit by this means of escape. Halmalo, I thank you."

"My lord marquis," said the Abbé Turmeau, "we are about to separate."

"Certainly we shall when we get down, for we can only escape one by one."

"Will not my lord appoint a meeting-place?"

"Yes, in the depth of the forest. The Stone of Gauvain. Do you know the spot?"

"We all know it."

"I shall be there to-morrow at noon. Let all who can keep on their feet be there."

"They shall be there."

"And we will begin the war afresh," said the marquis.

Just then Halmalo whilst pressing against the turning stone, perceived that it no longer moved. It was impossible to close the opening. "My lord," said he, "let us hasten. I have opened the passage, but I cannot shut it again."

The hinges of the stone had grown stiff from want of use, and it had become like a corpse rigid in its coffin. It was impossible to make it revolve. "My lord," said Halmalo, "I had hoped to have closed up the wall, so that the Blues, when they broke in, and found no one, might have supposed that we had gone off in the smoke. But the stone won't have anything of the kind. The enemy will perceive our means of exit, and can follow us. At least do not let us lose a minute. Quick then, every man to the staircase."

Imânus placed his hand on Halmalo's shoulder. "Comrade," said he, "how long will it be after we have entered the passage before we are in safety in the forest?"

"Is no one badly wounded?" asked Halmalo.

All answered, "No one."

"In that case, a quarter of an hour will be enough."

"So then," said Imânus, "if the ene-

my did not get in for a quarter of an hour ——?"

"They might follow, but they would never come up to us."

"But," said the marquis, "they will be in here in five minutes, for the old chest will not hinder them longer than that. A few more blows, and it will fall to pieces. A quarter of an hour! What is there that can keep them back for that time?"

"I can," said Imânus.

"You, Gouge le Bruant!"

"I, my lord, listen. Out of the six, five of you are wounded whilst I have not a scratch."

"Nor I either," said the marquis.

"You are our chief, my lord, I am a simple soldier. Chiefs and soldiers are different persons."

"I know that we have each a separate line of duty."

"No, my lord, both our duties are the same, they are to save you." Then Imânus turned to his comrades, "My friends," said he, "what we have to do is to keep the enemy at bay and to prevent them from pursuing as long as possible. See, I have all my strength left, I have not lost a drop of blood, and so, being unhurt, I can hold out much longer than another. Be off, all of you, and leave me your weapons. I will make good use of them, and will guarantee to stop the foe for fully half-an-hour. How many loaded pistols are there?"

"Four."

"Put them on the ground."

They obeyed his orders. "That is good, I stay here. They shall find some one to talk to. Now, quick! off with you all!" In critical moments there is no time for gratitude, they could do no more than grasp his hand.

"We shall meet again," said the marquis.

"Never, my lord, not in this world, for I am going to die."

They passed through the opening one by one, the wounded first. As the others were going down, the marquis took a pencil from his pocket, and wrote a few words on the immovable stone which disclosed the yawning passage. "Come, my lord," said Halmalo, "you are the last."

Halmalo began to descend, and the marquis followed him. Imânus was left alone.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EXECUTIONER.

THE four pistols had been placed on the flags, for this room had no wooden flooring. Imânus took two, one in each hand, and made a sidelong movement towards the doorway which was blocked up and hidden by the chest. The assailants evidently dreaded some surprise, one of those final explosions which the vanquished prepare for the victor, and as the first attack had been brilliant and dashing, so the last was methodical and slow. They had been unable, perhaps unwilling, to break down the chest entirely, but they had shattered it with heavy blows, and pierced it with bayonet thrusts, and through these holes they endeavoured to see what was going on within, before venturing to rush forwards. The light of the lanterns with which they had illumined the staircase penetrated through these holes. Imânus perceived at one of these apertures, an eye which seemed to be looking at him. He instantly levelled his pistol, and pulled the trigger; the report followed; and Imânus, with feelings of delight, heard a yell of agony. The bullet had entered the eye, and penetrated the brain of an unfortunate soldier who fell heavily backwards—dead. The assailants had made two rather larger holes in the chest, which formed something like loopholes. Imânus profited by these, and thrusting his hand through, he fired a second shot at random at the group behind, the bullet probably ricochéd, for he heard several cries and groans, as though a number had been killed or wounded, and a tumult on the stairs, as though men were hurriedly descending. Imânus threw down the two pistols of which he had already made such fatal use, and taking up the others looked through the holes in the box. He then saw the effect that his first fire had produced. The assailants had redescended the staircase. The wounded and dying were writhing in agony, but a sudden turn only permitted him to see four or five steps. He waited. "It is so much time gained" said he. All at once he saw a man creeping up the stairs on his hands and knees, whilst lower

down the head of a soldier peered round the corner. Imânus took aim at the head and fired. There was a sharp cry, and the soldier fell, whilst Imânus passed his last pistol from his left to his right hand. At that instant he felt a sensation of agonising pain, and in his terror he uttered a frightful cry. A sabre was buried in his bowels; a hand, the hand of the man who had crept up the stairs, had been pushed through one of the holes in the chest. The hand was armed with a sword, and that sword was now in the entrails of Imânus. It was a terrible wound, for he had been pierced through and through. But Imânus did not fall; he set his teeth firmly, and only muttered, "Good." Then with faltering steps, and dragging himself along with anguish and difficulty, he managed to reach the torch that was burning by the side of the iron door, and thrusting back with his left hand his protruding entrails, he set fire to the sulphur match. It caught at once, and blazed up. Imânus let fall the torch, which continued to burn on the ground, grasped his pistol tightly, and fell on the flags, but raised himself again with an effort, and blew the match with the feeble remains of breath that remained to him. The fire ran along, passed under the door, and gained the house on the bridge. Then seeing that his villainous deed had succeeded, he was more satisfied perhaps, with the crime that he had committed, than the valour that he had displayed. This man, who after acting as a hero, had sunk into a cowardly assassin, laughed bitterly as he lay down to die, muttering, "I have given them something to remember me by. I have avenged on these little children, the fate of the child who belongs to us all, the son of our King, incarcerated in the Temple.

CHAPTER XIV.

IMÂNUS GOES TO HIS OWN PLACE.

JUST then there was a tremendous uproar, the chest was thrown heavily backwards, and a man with a drawn sabre in his hand rushed into the room exclaiming. "It is I, Radoub. What are you going to do? I am sick of waiting; any way I have just disembowelled one of you. Now here goes for the lot. Whether the rest follow me or not, here am I. How many are you here?" It was indeed Radoub and he was alone. After the slaughter by Imânus on the staircase, Gauvain fearing some hidden mine, had withdrawn his men, and consulted Cimourdain. Radoub, grasping his sabre firmly remained on the threshold in the gloom which was hardly lighted by the expiring torch. "I am one," said he. "How many are you?"

Hearing nothing, he made a step forward. One of those sudden fits of flame, which dying fires suddenly throw up, and which may be termed Light's sobs, burst from the torch and illumined the room. Radoub caught a glimpse of himself in one of the little mirrors that hung on the wall; he went up to it, and carefully inspected his blood-stained face and wounded ear. "A nice object they have made of me," cried he. Then to his utter surprise, he perceived that the room was empty. "What, nobody!" cried he; "all the birds flown!" Then he caught sight of the turning stone, the opening, and the staircase. "Ah, I understand all now; they have taken the key of the fields. Come up, comrades; they are gone, they have bolted, filed off, struck their camp; this old pot of a tower was cracked all through. Here is the hole through which the rogues have sneaked off. How can we hope to get the better of Pitt and Cobourg, when they play such tricks as these? Their patron the devil, must have come to their aid, for there is no one here." The report of a pistol was heard, and a bullet, grazing his elbow, flattened itself against the wall. "But, after all, there is some one here. Pray who had the courtesy to pay me that delicate attention?"

"It was I," said a voice.

Radoub gazed forward, and in the dim light saw a form which was that of Imânus. "Aha," cried he, "at any rate, I have got one; the others may have got off, but you are trapped."

"Do you think so?" asked Imânus.

Radoub took a step towards him. "Eh, you man on the ground," said he, "who are you?"

"I am the man lying down who laughs at those who are standing up."

"What is that in your right hand?"

"A pistol."

"And in your left?"

"My bowels."

"You are my prisoner."

"I defy you," and Imânus bending over the match blew on it with his last fleeting breath, and fell back dead.

In a few minutes, Gauvain, Cimourdain, and the rest of the stormers, were in the room. All rushed to the opening. They looked into every corner, they felt about the staircase, searched it thoroughly, and found that it opened into the ravine. They saw how the escape had been made. They shook Imânus, but he was quite dead. Gauvain with a lantern examined the opening stone by which the besieged had made their escape. He, too, had heard of the turning stone, but had looked on the legend as a fabulous one. Whilst he was looking at it, he perceived a few words written on it in pencil; he placed his light close to it, and read this line,

"*To our next meeting, Viscount,*

"LANTENAC."

Guéchamp had now rejoined Gauvain. Pursuit would evidently be fruitless, the escape was completed and over. The fugitives had for their allies, the thicket, the ravine, the brushwood, and the country people. No doubt they were now far away, there was no chance of finding them again; the whole Forest of Fougères was one immense hiding-place. What was to be done. All must be begun over again. Gauvain and Guéchamp exchanged their conjectures and disappointment.

Cimourdain listened to them gravely, without uttering a word.

"By the way, Guéchamp," said Gauvain, "where is the ladder?

"Commandant, it has not yet arrived."

"What is it then that *has* come?

"*The guillotine!*" answered Cimourdain.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FOLLY OF PUTTING A WATCH AND KEY IN THE SAME POCKET.

BUT the Marquis de Lantenac was not so far away as they fancied, though he was not the less in safety and out of their reach. He had followed Halmalo. The staircase by which they had descended on the traces of the other fugitives terminated in the ravine near the arches of the bridge in a narrow vaulted entrance. This arch opened into a natural fissure of the ground, which led into the ravine on one side, and the forest on the other. A fugitive, when once he had reached this fissure, had only to glide away like a snake, for it was entirely hidden from outside view, and wound through impenetrable thickets. It was impossible to follow a man through them. The entrance to the concealed passage was so blocked up by brambles, that the constructor had not thought it necessary to use any other means for its concealment. The marquis need now only go where he liked. He need not take any care about his disguise, for since he had been in Brittany, he had always dressed himself as a peasant, considering that he looked more like a noble leader of the peasants in this costume. He had limited himself to unbuckling his belt, and flinging it and his sword away. When Halmalo and the marquis emerged from the passage into the fissure, the other five, Hoisnard, Branche d'Or, Brin d'Amour, Chatenay, and the Abbé Turmeau were no longer in sight.

"They have not been long in taking to their heels," observed Halmalo.

"Do as they have done," said the marquis.

"Does my lord wish me to leave him?"

"Certainly. Have I not already told you that it is easy for one to escape; one passes without difficulty, but two are stopped at once. If we keep together we attract attention. You would get me arrested, and I should do the same for you."

"Does my lord know this part of the country?"

"Yes."

"Will your lordship keep the appointment at the Stone of Gauvain?"

"To-morrow at noon."

"I shall be there, we shall all be there!"

Halmalo interrupted himself. "Ah! my lord, when I recollect that we were alone together on the open sea, and that I wanted to kill you, that you were my lord, and could have told me so, but did not! Ah, what a man you are!"

The marquis continued, "England, there is no other hope but in her; in fifteen days the English must be in France."

"I have many reports to make to you, my lord. I executed all your orders."

"We will speak of all that to-morrow."

"To-morrow be it, my lord."

"By the way, are you hungry?"

"Perhaps, my lord. I was so anxious to arrive, that I hardly knew if I have eaten to-day or not."

The marquis drew from his pocket a cake of chocolate, which he broke in two, and giving half to Halmalo, began to eat the remainder himself.

"My lord," said Halmalo, "on your right is the ravine, on your left the forest."

"Good. Now leave me, and go on your way!"

Halmalo obeyed him, and plunged into the darkness. For a short time the crashing of the brushwood could be heard, and then, all was silence! In a few seconds it would have been impossible to follow his tracks. The land of the Bocage, full of impenetrable thickets was the best ally of the fugitives. A man did not simply disappear, he vanished. It was this facility for rapid disappearances, which made an army hesitate before attacking a country like La Vendée, which was always retiring, and before combatants so formidable in their retreat. The marquis remained motionless; he was one of those men who never allowed their emotions to be seen, and yet he could not prevent a feeling of pleasure from creeping over him, as he once more breathed the fresh air of heaven, so welcome a change from the atmosphere of blood and carnage in which he had been previously existing. To feel that he was saved, after having given himself up as utterly lost, and after having seen the tomb so close to him; to issue forth into perfect safety; to leave death behind, and to speed on once more on the path of life, was, for a man, like Lantenac even, a heavy shock. He confessed to himself that he had a feeling of relief, but he soon crushed that feeling down, which had too great a resemblance to pleasure to suit him. He drew out his repeater, and struck the hour: what time was it? To his immense surprise it was only ten o'clock. When a man has just passed through some terrible paroxysm of existence, in which everything has been at stake, he is always surprised to find that those terrible moments of doubt and uncertainty were only, after all, of ordinary length. The warning cannon shot had been fired a little before sunset, and La Tourgue had been assailed by the column of attack half an hour afterwards, between seven and eight o'clock at night. So this Homeric combat had begun at eight, and ended at ten. All this epic poem had only lasted for one hundred and twenty minutes.

Fatal conclusions sometimes flash onwards with the rapidity of lightning, and climaxes are overwhelming from their suddenness. On reflection, the most astonishing thing to him was, that it had lasted so long. That so scanty a force could have resisted for so long against overwhelming numbers was almost miraculous, and assuredly this combat of nineteen against four thousand had been rather short, and quickly concluded.

But now it was time for him to leave this spot. Halmalo must by this time have got far enough away, and the marquis considered that there would be no good in remaining where he was any longer. So putting back his watch into his pocket, not into the same one that he had taken it from, for he had remarked, that it had been in contact with the key of the iron door, which Imânus had handed to him, and there was a chance of the glass being broken against it, he prepared in his turn to plunge into the forest. As he turned to the left, a dim gleam of light flashed into the darkness by which he was surrounded. He walked back through the undergrowth, and all at once, and sharply delineated against a crimson background, and plainly visible in its

smallest outline, he perceived a bright light in the ravine. But a few paces divided him from it. He hastened forward, then remembered that it was madness to venture into the light.

After all it did not concern him, whatever it might be that had happened. Once more he set out in the direction that Halmalo had pointed out to him, and walked a short distance into the forest. Suddenly, deep as he was concealed in the thicket, he heard a terrible cry ring out above his head; it seemed to come from the very edge of the plateau, which crowned the ravine. The marquis lifted his eyes, and stood still.

BOOK V.

IN DÆMONE DEUS.

CHAPTER I.

FOUND YET LOST.

When Michelle Fléchard just caught a glimpse of the tower, she was fully a league distant from it. She, who a moment before could scarcely put one foot before the other, did not hesitate for an instant at traversing the distance. Women are weak, but mothers are strong, and she had had practice in walking. The sun had set, and the twilight came on, then complete darkness. She heard, as she ceaselessly walked on, first eight, and then nine o'clock strike from some distant belfry, most likely that of Parigné. Every now and then she paused for an instant to listen to some strange dull sounds, which perhaps might be only the voices of the night winds. She went straight on, breaking beneath her cut and bleeding feet the heath and furze. Her guide was a dim light which seemed to emanate from the tower, making its outline visible against the darkness, and clothing it with a strange mysterious glimmer. This light flashed up when she heard the sounds, and disappeared when there was silence. The wide plain over which Michelle Fléchard was passing was covered with furze and heath, there was not a tree or a house to be seen upon it. It stretched away in one long line, harsh and distinct to the distant horizon, in which a few faint stars were visible. What sustained her in her task was that the tower was ever in sight.

She saw it grow gradually larger and more distinct.

The stifled detonations, and livid flashes which issued from the tower, were, as we have before said, intermittent. They came, then ceased, and then re-appeared again, once more offering an insolvable riddle to the distressed mother.

All of a sudden they ceased entirely, noise, light, and all; then came an intense silence, melancholy yet threatening.

It was at that instant that Michelle Fléchard arrived at the edge of the plateau. At her feet was a ravine, the bottom of which was lost in the shades of night. At a little distance off, on the top of the plateau, was a confused entanglement of wheels, slopes, and embrasures, which was a battery of artillery; and in front of her, vaguely lighted up by the port fires of the gunners, was a gigantic building which seemed built of a darkness, darker than that which surrounded it. This building was composed of a bridge whose arches spanned the ravine, and of a kind of castle which rose from the bridge. The castle and the bridge seemed to rest against an enormous dark circular object, which was the tower, to reach which the poor mother had journeyed from so far.

Lights were visible through the loopholes of the tower, and from the sounds which issued from it, it was easy to guess that it was occupied by many men, some dim outlines could be seen on the battlements which crowned it.

Near the battery was a camp, whose outposts Michelle Fléchard could dis-

tinguish, but owing to the darkness, and the heather by which she was surrounded, they had not as yet perceived her. She advanced close to the edge of the plateau, so close to the bridge that it appeared to her as if she could stretch out her hand and touch it. She was only separated from it by the depths of the ravine. She could see through the darkness the three stories of the castle on the bridge.

She remained for some time, how long she knew not, for measures of time and space were almost effaced from her brain, absorbed and silent before this yawning precipice, and this shadowy edifice. "What was it? What were they doing inside? Was it La Tourgue?" She was seized with a feeling of dizziness, such as prevents one from knowing one's point of arrival or departure. She asked herself why she had come there; she gazed, she listened. All at once she saw nothing more. A veil of smoke rose up between her and the tower upon which her eyes were fixed. The acrid fumes of the smoke made her close her eyes involuntarily; scarcely had she closed her lids, than a purple light shone through them, and made her open them again. There was no longer the blackness of night before her, all was bright, but it was a terrible light, not that of day. It was the light of a conflagration. Beneath her very eyes the fire had burst forth. The black hue of the smoke had become scarlet, a devouring flame seemed to be within it. This flame appeared and again disappeared, with hideous turns and twists like the writhing of fiery serpents. This flame burst out like a tongue from something that appeared like a pair of jaws, and which was a flaming window. This window protected by iron bars, already glowing in the heat, was in the lower story of the castle on the bridge. All the rest of the building with the exception of this window was invisible. The thick cloud of smoke enveloped it, spreading even over the plateau, the edge of which only could be seen standing out dark against the lurid flames.

Michelle still stood stupefied with amazement. Smoke is a vision, a vision is a dream; she no longer knew what she saw. Ought she to fly, or ought she to remain? She felt that nothing around her was real.

A breath of wind swept by and cleft the curtain of smoke, and as it tore it on one side, the whole frowning fortalice was disclosed, tower, bridge, and castle, dazzling, yet hideous with all the terrible gilding of conflagration upon it from top to bottom. Michelle Fléchard could perceive everything by the light of this frightful illumination. The bottom story of the castle on the bridge was a mass of flames. Above it, the two other stories were as yet untouched by the fire but appeared as if supported in a flaming basket. From the edge of the plateau upon which Michelle Fléchard stood, it was possible between the changes of smoke into flame to catch an indistinct view of the interior of the castle. All the windows were open. Through the windows of the second floor, which were very large, Michelle Fléchard could see cupboards ranged all along the walls, which seemed full of books, and in front of one of the windows lying on the ground in the shadow, a small confused group, indistinct, and crowded together like birds in a nest, and which every now and then seemed to move. She kept her eyes on this. What could this little group in the shade be? Occasionally the idea came to her that it was composed of living creatures; but she was parched with fever, she had eaten nothing since the morning, and had walked without stop or stay; she was thoroughly worn out, and it seemed to her as though some kind of delusion was creeping over her, which she endeavoured to fight against, and yet her eyes insensibly fixed themselves upon that strange object probably an inanimate one, which was lying on the floor in the room immediately above the conflagration. All of a sudden the fire, as though it were a living thing with instincts of its own, threw one of its tongues at the dead ivy, which covered the wall of the room at which Michelle Fléchard was looking so earnestly. It appeared as if the flames had just discovered this network of dry branches. A spark seized on it greedily, and began to ascend the twigs and branches with the rapidity of a train of gunpowder. In the twinkling of an eye the devouring flames had seized upon the second story; then, as they ascended, they lighted up the interior of the first floor, and the brilliant

light threw out in bold relief the forms of three sleeping children.

It was a perfect heap of loveliness, arms and legs mingled together, eyes closed, and fair smiling faces.

The mother recognised her children.

She uttered a piercing shriek.

It is only mothers who can utter a cry of such inexpressible anguish. Nothing is more terrible or more heart-rending. When a woman utters it you fancy you are listening to a she-wolf; when a she-wolf, that you hear a woman's accents.

Michelle Fléchard howled. Homer says Hecuba howled. This was the cry that the Marquis de Lantenac had heard, and as we have seen, it made him stop.

The marquis was between the passage into which the outlet that he had been shown by Halmalo led and the ravine. Through the interlaced brambles he could see the bridge all in flames, and La Tourgue crimson with the reflection; by pulling aside the branches he could see, above his head, upon the opposite side, on the edge of the platform, a haggard and despairing figure, a woman bending over the depths. The woman no longer resembled Michelle Fléchard, she was a Gorgon. The wretched are terrible in their misery. The peasant woman had been transformed into one of the Furies. This ignorant and uncultured village woman had become magnificent in the height of her despair. Utter despairing misery causes the soul to rise to the most gigantic heights. The mother was an emblem of maternity, all that is included in the human and the supernatural. She stood there on the border of the ravine, before that blazing conflagration, in the presence of that accursed crime, like a spirit from beyond the grave, howling like a wild beast, but with the attitude of a goddess. Her face, from the mouth of which fell a string of imprecations, was like a flaming mask. Nothing could have been more commanding than the gleams of lightning blazing from her eyes which were drowned in tears. Her very look was sufficient to stifle the conflagration.

The marquis stood and listened to her; the whole force of her rough pathos struck him full in the face; he heard her utter inarticulate and heart-rending words, more like sobs than actual speech. "Oh, great heavens, my children! my children! Help! Fire, fire, fire, fire! Are you murderers? Is there no man here? My children will be burnt to death! Ah, how terrible a thing! Georgette! my children, Gros-Alain! René Jean! What am I talking about? Who has put my children there? They are sleeping: I am growing mad. The thing is impossible! Help, help!"

There was a hurried movement both in La Tourgue and in the camp. All the men ran to the scene of the fire which had so suddenly burst forth. After fighting musketry, they had now to contend with fire. Gauvain, Cimourdain, and Guéchamp, all gave orders. What was to be done? There were hardly a dozen buckets of water in the slender stream that trickled at the bottom of the ravine. Anguish and despair gained the mastery, and the edge of the plateau was crowded with men with terror and dismay depicted in their features. The scene that they gazed upon was a terrible one. The flames crawling up the ivy had gained the attic filled with straw and pounced greedily upon it, and danced joyously over the new scene of their devastation. The joy of the fire is a sight sad to witness. It seemed as if a malignant wind was fanning the conflagration, or that the spirit of the terrible Imânus was there transformed into a cloud of sparks, and bent on completing the cruel deed that his own vile heart had conceived. The library was not yet on fire, the height of its ceiling and the thickness of its walls kept back the fire for a time, but the fatal moment was rapidly approaching. The tongues of fire on the first floor licked it, and the flames from the second floor seemed eager to fold it in their embraces; the terrible kiss of death half pressed its lips. Below was a cellar of fire; above a ceiling of burning embers. Should there be a hole in the planking it was a burial beneath red-hot cinders; a hole in the ceiling, and it meant a hideous death in the burning embers. René Jean, Gros-Alain, and Georgette were not yet awake; they slept the calm deep sleep of infancy, and through the jets of flame and the thick smoke which one after the other hid and disclosed the windows, they could

be seen in that fiery grotto, in the fierce blaze of that meteoric light, calm, peaceful, and immovable, like three infant Saviours sleeping in the midst of a fiery hell; even tigers would have wept at seeing those roses in a furnace, those cradles on the brink of the grave.

Meanwhile the mother raised her hands to heaven crying, "Fire, fire! I cry. Are you all deaf that you do not see that my children are being burnt to death? Come and save them, you men standing idly there! For days and days I have walked, and is it like this that I am to find them? Fire! Help! Little angels! are they not angels? What crime have these innocent creatures committed that they should be burnt alive? Who is it that does such things? Help! save my children! Does no one hear me? Would you not pity a dog if it were in such a position? My sweet children! they are asleep. Ah, Georgette! I can see the sweet innocent! René Jean, Gros-Alain! those are their names. You see I am their mother. What is going on is too terrible. I have walked days and nights to find them; why to-day I even spoke of them to a woman. Help! help! Fire! Are you all monsters? It is too horrible; the eldest is only five, the youngest is not yet two. I can see their little bare legs. They are sleeping! Holy Virgin! the hand of heaven gave them to me, and the hand of hell takes them away again. And I have walked so far! Children that I have nursed at my breast! I, who thought myself so unfortunate at not being able to find them again. Have pity on me. I want my children; I must have my children. Can it be true that they are there in the midst of that fire? Look at my feet all torn and blood-stained. Help! it is not possible that any men on earth would leave these poor children to die like this! Help! Murder! Who can bear such things? Ah, brigands! What is that terrible house here? They have stolen them from me to kill them. Jesus, have mercy! I want my children; I do not know what I shall do! I do not wish them to die. Help! help! help! Oh, if they die like this I will kill God Himself!"

Whilst the poor mother was uttering these heart-rending supplications, the following conversation was going on upon the plateau, and in the ravines.

"A ladder!"

"There are no ladders."

"There is no water."

"Up there in the tower there is a door!"

"It is made of iron, though!"

"Break it down."

"It is impossible."

Again the mother redoubled her despairing entreaties.

"Fire! Help! Hurry yourselves! Come kill me! My children! my children! ah, the cruel fire! Take them out of it, or else throw me into it."

In the pauses between these ejaculation the cruel steady crackling of the fire could be heard.

The marquis felt in his pocket, and his hand encountered the key of the iron door. Then bending his head he passed under the arch by which he had made his escape, and re-entered the passage from which he hastened.

CHAPTER II.

FROM THE DOOR OF STONE TO THE DOOR OF IRON.

This was the position: a terrified army powerless to save, four thousand men unable to rescue three children. There was no ladder, for the one sent for from Javené had not arrived. The fire increased in size like a crater which opens. It would have been childish to attempt to extinguish it with the scanty supply of water in the brook; it would have been like throwing a glass of water on a volcano. Cimourdain, Guéchamp, and Radoub had gone down into the ravine; Gauvain had ascended to the room in which was the movable stone, the secret exit, and the iron door of the library. It was there that the match which Imânus had lighted had been placed, it was here in this spot that the conflagration had commenced. Gauvain had brought with him twenty sappers. To break open the iron door was the last resource, but it was terribly strong. They began to work with axes. The axes broke,

and one of the sappers said, "Steel is like glass on that iron."

The door was composed of wrought iron, and made in double layers of three inches in thickness.

Then they took iron bars, and tried to prize it up from the bottom. The iron bars broke.

"Just like matches," said the sapper.

Gauvain's face grew gloomy, as he muttered, "It is only a cannon ball that will open it; we must bring up a gun."

"How can we do that?" asked the sapper.

Then came a moment of intense discouragement. All their powerless arms fell by their sides. Dumb, vanquished, and, filled with consternation, the men gazed upon the immovable door. A red glare fell upon them, from underneath it, the conflagration was spreading behind it. The hideous corpse of Imânus lay near them, who in death seemed to have gained the victory.

In a few minutes perhaps all would be over. What was to be done? Must they give up all hope? Gauvain boiling over with rage, and with his eye fixed on the turning stone, and the secret exit, exclaimed, "And yet it is by that way that the Marquis de Lantenac went out."

"And by which he returns," answered a voice.

And a white head appeared framed in the stone that surrounded the entrance to the hidden staircase.

It was the marquis.

Gauvain had not seen him so close for many years; he started back. All the rest remained in the same attitude as though they were petrified.

The marquis held a large key in his hand; with a look he motioned on one side some sappers who were standing in his way, walked straight to the iron door, bent his head under the vaulted porch, and placed the key in the lock. It creaked; the door opened into a perfect gulf of flame. With head erect, and firm step, the marquis entered. All followed his movements with trembling anxiety. Scarcely had the marquis advanced many paces into the burning room, than the flooring, half-burnt through by the fire, yielded to his weight, and fell with a crash, leaving a precipice between him and the door. He never turned his head, but continued his advance, and was soon lost to sight in the smoke and flame.

They could see no more.

Had he been able to get on further? Had a fresh fiery furnace opened beneath his feet? Had he only succeeded in bringing about his own destruction? No one could answer. In front of them was a wall of fire and smoke; beyond it was the marquis, living or dead!

CHAPTER III.

WHERE WE SEE THE SAME CHILDREN AWAKE, THAT WE SAW GO TO SLEEP.

However, the children had at last commenced to open their eyes. The conflagration, which had not yet made its entry into the library, cast a roseate hue on the ceiling. The children could not understand this. They stared at it, Georgette looked at it calmly. All the splendours of conflagration were displayed, the black snake, huge, misshapen, dark, and crimson. Long tongues of flame flew to immense distances, and cast rays of lurid light through the darkness. It appeared like a combat of comets, pursuing and chasing each other. Fire is lavish in the extreme; it possesses magnificent jewel cases, the contents of which it scatters to the four winds of heaven. It is not for nothing that charcoal is the roughest form of diamond. Fissures had been formed in the wall of the third floor through which the furnace within poured out a stream of its precious stones; the heaps of oats and straw which were stored there began to pour out of the windows in streams of powdered gold, the grain of the oats becoming amethysts, and the tops of the straw carbuncles.

"Pretty," cried Georgette; they were all three sitting up at once.

"Ah!" cried the mother, "they are awake now."

First René Jean got up, then Gros-Alain, and lastly Georgette. René Jean stretched himself, crossed over to the window and exclaimed, "I am warm."

"I warm," repeated Georgette.

Then the mother called to them. "My children! René, Alain, Georgette!"

The children looked all around them. They endeavoured to understand. Where men are terrified, children are only curious He who is easily surprised, is hard to be frightened. Intrepidity is the offspring of ignorance. Children have so little right to hell, that they can look upon fire without dread, and admire it. The mother called again, "René, Alain, Georgette!"

René Jean turned his head; this voice seemed to rouse him from his thoughtful mood; children have short memories, but their perceptions are quick, and the past for them is but yesterday. René Jean recognised his mother; there seemed to him nothing strange in her being there, surrounded as he was by so many wonderful things. He felt a vague need of help, and so cried out, "Mother!"

"Mother!" exclaimed Gros-Alain.

"Muzzer," said Georgette, stretching out her little arms. Then the mother shrieked,—"My children!" All three children advanced to the window; fortunately the fire was not on that side.

"I am too hot," said René Jean; and added, "Something is burning." Then casting his glance on his mother, he cried, "Come to us, mother!"

"Tum, muzzer," repeated Georgette. The wretched woman with dishevelled hair, torn and bleeding from every part, let herself roll from thicket to thicket until she reached the bottom of the ravine. Cimourdain was down there with Guéchamp, as powerless to save the children as Gauvain was above. The soldiers, despairing of being of any use, crowded around them. The heat was growing insupportable, and yet no one seemed to feel it. They measured with their eyes the steepness of the ravine, the height of the arches, the elevation of the stories, the inaccessibility of the windows. Three floors to climb up, and no means of doing so. Radoub, wounded by a sabre thrust in the shoulder, with one of his ears carried away, covered with blood and sweat, had hurried to the spot. He saw Michelle Flécharde. "Holloa!" cried he, "the woman that was shot! Have you come to life again?"

"My children!" cried the woman.

"You are right," answered Radoub; "we have no time to think of ghosts," and he endeavoured to climb up the bridge. He dug his fingers into the stones, and clung there for a few minutes, but his efforts were in vain; there was not a crack or crevice, no hold for foot or hand, the stones of the arches were as accurately laid as though the wall was perfectly new. The terrible conflagration increased, and they could see the three little fair heads framed in red at the window. Radoub raised his clenched fist to the skies, exclaiming, "Is this how you prove yourself a merciful Providence?" The woman knelt before the piers of the bridge, shrieking, "Mercy!"

Loud crashes began to mingle with the crackling of the flames. The glass in the bookcases of the library shivered and fell with a ringing sound. It was too plain that the woodwork was giving way all over the place. No human power could now avail. Another five minutes, and all would be over. Every one waited for the fatal moment to come. The voices of the children could be heard shrieking for their mother, they were now in a paroxysm of terror.

All at once, outlined against the red glare of the flames, a tall figure appeared at one of the windows near the one where the children were. All raised their heads, and gazed eagerly at this unlooked-for apparition. There was a man up there,—a man in the library, a man in the midst of the fiery furnace. The form stood out black and distinct against a background of flame; the spectators could see that it had white hair, and all recognised the Marquis de Lantenac. He disappeared for a moment, and then appeared again. The wonderful old man dragged an enormous ladder to the window. It was the ladder of escape that had been placed in the library, he had brought it from its position against the wall, and dragged it to the window. He seized it by one end, and with all the gigantic power of his athletic frame he thrust it out of the window, and allowed it to glide down the outer wall to the bottom of the ravine. Radoub filled with wonder and amazement, held up his hands, and caught the lower rungs of the

ladder, exclaiming as he did so, "Long live the Republic!"

"Long live the King!" returned the marquis.

"You can say what you like," growled Radoub between his teeth, "and shout any folly you may desire, for you are our Providence."

The ladder was firmly fixed, and the communication established, between the burning room and the ground. Twenty men ran up it, Radoub at their head. On the ladder of wood was a ladder of flesh and blood. Radoub on the topmost rung touched the window, his face was turned towards the fire. The little army scattered over the heath and the ravine pressed forward, overcome at the same time by varied emotions. The marquis disappeared once more, then came to the window again with a child in his arms. Every one clapped their hands.

The marquis had seized at random the first one upon whom he could lay his hands; it was Gros-Alain.

"I am frightened," said Gros-Alain.

The marquis handed him to Radoub, who passed him behind his back to the soldier below him, who gave him to the next one, and thus Gros-Alain, crying and screaming, was handed from one to the other until he reached the bottom of the ladder.

Once more the marquis disappeared, and then returned to the window with René Jean, who cried and struggled and struck at Radoub with his little fists as the serjeant received him from the marquis. Again the Marquis de Lantenac turned back into the flaming room. Georgette had been left till the last. As he approached her she smiled. This man of marble felt the tears spring to his eyes. "What is your name?" asked he.

"Orgette," she replied.

He raised her up in his arms, she was still smiling, and at the moment that he passed her to Radoub, his spirit so lofty and yet so dark, was dazzled by her innocence, and bending forwards he gave her a kiss. "It is the little pet," said the soldiers, as Georgette in her turn was passed from hand to hand until she arrived on the ground amidst cries of admiration, and clapping of hands. Many a rough old soldier had tears in his eyes, as he caught a glimpse of the child's innocent smile. The distracted mother had taken up her position at the foot of the ladder, panting with eagerness, half wild with this unexpected turn of events, this transition to Paradise from Pandemonium. The excess of her joy was almost painful to her. She stretched out her arms, and received first Gros-Alain, then René Jean, and lastly Georgette; she covered them with kisses and caresses, and then with a loud cry fell senseless to the ground.

A shout rose up to the sky, "Saved, they are all saved!"

All were saved except the old man, but no one thought of him, he himself, perhaps, least of all. He remained for a short time lost in thought, leaning on the window ledge, as though he wished to leave the gulf of flame time to choose its own part. Then without hurry, proudly and leisurely, he stepped out of the window and without turning round, descended the ladder with his back to the fire, and his face to the precipice, moving with all the grandeur of some mighty spirit. When the marquis had reached the last step of the ladder, and was about to place his foot on the ground, a hand grasped his collar.

"I arrest you," said Cimourdain.

"And I approve of your act," answered Lantenac.

BOOK VI.

IT IS AFTER THE VICTORY, THE FIGHT BEGINS.

CHAPTER I.

LANTENAC A PRISONER.

When the marquis descended the ladder he was coming down to his tomb. They led him away. The dungeon in the crypt of La Tourgue was at once opened under Cimourdain's rigid supervision; they placed in it a lamp, a pitcher of water, some ammunition bread, and threw in afterwards a truss of straw, and less than a quarter of an hour after the moment when the priest's hand made Lantenac a prisoner, the door of the dungeon closed on the marquis.

That duty fulfilled, Cimourdain went in search of Gauvain; as he did so eleven o'clock sounded from the distant spire of Parigné. Cimourdain said to Gauvain, "You are a Gauvain, and Lantenac is a Gauvain. You are too nearly connected with him to sit in judgment upon him. I blame Égalité for having voted for Capet's death. The court shall have three members, an officer, Captain Guéchamp, a non-commissioned officer, Sergeant Radoub, with myself as President. You have nothing further to do with the matter. We will conform to the order of the Convention, and prove the identity of the ex-marquis. To-morrow, the Court Martial; the next day, the guillotine. La Vendée is dead!"

Gauvain made no reply, and Cimourdain, occupied by his last urgent task, left him, for he had hours to fix and spots to choose. He had the habit of assisting personally at all executions, thinking it necessary to show a good example, the judge seeing that the headsman did his work properly. This custom had been borrowed by the Reign of Terror '93 from the proceedings of the Parliament of France and the Inquisition of Spain.

Gauvain also was deep in thought.

A cold wind was blowing through the forest. Gauvain leaving Guéchamp to give the necessary orders went to his tent which was pitched on the borders of the wood near La Tourgue, then he put on his hooded cloak. It was plain and simple after the republican fashion, and only showed his rank as commandant by a single strip of lace. Then he crossed the bloodstained spot where the combat had first commenced. He was alone there: the conflagration was still raging, but no one took any further notice of it. Radoub was seated near the mother and her children, almost as solicitous for their comfort as she was herself. The castle on the bridge had nearly finished burning, and the sappers were completing the work that the flames had left unfinished. Some men were digging graves for the burial of the dead, others were attending to the wounded. They had demolished the barricade, removed the bodies from the rooms and staircase, cleaned out the chamber of blood and carnage, and swept away all the hideous relics of victory with true military celerity and precision. But Gauvain saw nothing of all this. Scarcely did he cast his eye on the guard on the breach which had been doubled by Cimourdain's orders. He could distinguish the breach in the gloom, some two hundred feet away from the field into which he had gone. He could even perceive its dark yawning mouth. It was there that the fight had commenced three hours before. It was by that gloomy entrance that he had penetrated into the interior of the tower; there was the spot where the barricade had stood; and it was on this floor that the door of the Marquis de Lantenac's prison opened. The guard on the breach had charge of the prisoner.

Whilst his eyes were absently fixed on the heath, he seemed to hear those words repeated which rang like a knell on his ear, "To-morrow, the Court Martial; the next day, the guillotine." The fire, which had been prevented from spreading, and

upon which the sappers were throwing all the water that they had been able to procure had not yielded without a struggle, and cast up intermittent flames. At moments you could hear the crash of the ceilings as the different floors fell in on each other, then would arise a cloud of sparks as though some mighty torch had been rudely shaken, and a blaze of light would disclose the horizon, and the gloomy shadow of La Tourgue extending far away over the forest. Gauvain paced up and down in this shadow in front of the breach. Every now and then he crossed his hands behind his head hidden in the hood of his cloak; he was thinking deeply.

CHAPTER II.

THE HOOD OF THE COMMANDANT.

For a long time Gauvain communed with himself. He was torn between his desire and his duty. Duty had shown itself, stern and implacable, in the eyes of Cimourdain, and terrible to execute in the eyes of Gauvain. A simple thing to the one, but a devious, tortuous, and perplexing path to the other. First midnight chimed, then one o'clock. Hardly conscious of what he was about, Gauvain had gradually approached the entrance to the breach. The dying flames of the castle only cast forth occasional gleams. On the other side of the tower, the plateau caught an occasional glimmer of its reflection, and for a moment became visible, and then again disappeared in gloom, as the smoke hid the flames from view. The glare springing to life every now and then in sudden outbursts, but separated by occasional cloaks of shadow, changed the aspect of the surroundings, and made the sentinels look like spectres. Gauvain, even in the midst of his reverie, could not help watching the alternate defeats of the smoke by the flame, and the flame by the smoke. These appearances and disappearances of the light before his very eyes, had some analogy with the uncertain shiftings of the truth in his mind.

All at once, amidst the winding wreaths of smoke, a burst of flame from the raging furnace cast a vivid light upon the top of the plateau, and exhibited the red outlines of a waggon passing over it. Gauvain looked at it. It was surrounded by horsemen who wore the headgear of gendarmes. It seemed to him that it was the same cart which he had seen through Guéchamp's telescope, some hours before, when the sun was just setting. Men were clambering about the cart, and seemed busily engaged in unloading it. The things that they were taking out of the cart seemed to be heavy, and gave forth a sound like the clank of metallic objects. It was difficult to say of what the load consisted It looked like beams for some kind of framework. Two of the men then lifted out a box, and placed it upon the ground, which, judging from its shape, seemed to contain some triangular object. The flame died down, and all was once more darkness. Gauvain, still immersed in his sad reverie, stood gazing towards that object which the gloomy obscurity hid from him.

Lanterns were now lighted, and men moved to and fro upon the plateau; but their movements were confused, and besides, Gauvain was below them, and with the ravine between, so that he was unable to see what was being done. He could hear the hum of voices, but could not distinguish their words. Now and again he heard sounds like blows given on wood; there was also another noise, a kind of rasping sound such as is heard when a scythe is being sharpened.

Two o'clock struck.

Gauvain moved, half-unwillingly, towards the breach. At his approach, the sentinel, recognising in the half light the cloak of his commandant, presented arms. Gauvain passed him, and entered the room on the ground floor, which had been converted into a guard-room. A lantern was hung from the roof of the vault. It gave just sufficient light to enable any one to walk across the floor without trampling on the bodies of the men of the guard who lay about here and there on beds of straw, the greater portion of them asleep. They were sleeping, where a few hours before they had been fighting; the bullets which still strewed the ground which had been imperfectly swept, annoyed them a little,

but they were wearied out, and soon forgot such troubles in sleep. This room had been for them a terrible spot; there they had raged, yelled, clashed weapon against weapon, struck, killed, and died. Many of their comrades had fallen on this very pavement; but now all was over, blood had ceased to flow, sabres had been wiped, the dead were dead, and the living slumbered peacefully. Such is warfare. And to-morrow all the world will sleep the same as ever. At Gauvain's entrance several of the men rose to their feet, and amongst them the officer commanding the guard. Gauvain pointed to the door of the dungeon. "Open it for me," said he.

The bolts were drawn back, and the door flung open; he entered the dungeon, and the door closed behind him.

BOOK VII.

FEUDALITY AND REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE ANCESTRAL NAME.

A LAMP had been placed on the flagstones near the square air-hole of the dungeon, beside it was a pitcher of water, a loaf of bread, and a truss of straw. The dungeon had been hewn out of the solid rock, and the prisoner who might take a fancy to set fire to his straw would give himself useless trouble; there would be no danger to the prison, but the certainty of suffocation for himself.

At the moment when the door turned on its hinges, the marquis was pacing up and down his cell, after the manner of caged beasts. At the sound of the opening and closing door, he raised his eyes, and the lamp that stood upon the floor between Gauvain and the marquis lighted up the faces of both the men.

They looked at each other earnestly without moving a muscle, then the marquis burst into a loud laugh and exclaimed,

"Good evening, sir. It is many years since I had the pleasure of meeting you, and now you have had the courtesy to come and visit me yourself. I ask for nothing better than to talk to you, and I thank you for coming, for in fact I was getting a little wearied here. Your friends are wasting time, with their proofs of identity and their Courts Martial; such modes of acting are far too long. I, for my part, should have got to work in a much more speedy manner. Here I am in my own house, pray give yourself the trouble to enter. Well, now, what do you think of what has taken place? Strange, is it not? Once there used to be a King and Queen in this country, the King was the King, and the Queen was—France. They cut off the head of the King, and married the Queen to Robespierre. This gentleman and lady had a daughter whom they christened the Guillotine, and it seems from what I hear that I am to make her acquaintance to-morrow morning. I shall be delighted, as I am to see you. Have you come on that matter? Have you been promoted? Shall you act as my executioner? If it is only a simple visit of friendship, I feel it deeply. Perhaps, viscount, you no longer know what a nobleman is. Well, if you want to see one, here he is, I am one; look at the sample. It is quite a curiosity: it believes in God, it believes in tradition, it believes in family rank, it believes in ancestral honours, it believes in the example handed down from its father, in fidelity and loyalty, in its duty to the sovereign, in its respects for ancient laws, in virtue and justice, and would have you shot with the greatest pleasure. Be seated, I beg of you. It must be on the pavement, for I have no armchair in my reception room; but, after all, he who lives in the mud, can well sit on the ground. I do not say this to offend you, but what we term the mud, you term the nation. You do not, I hope, require that

I should shout for Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. This is one of the ancient chambers of my house; formerly the lords of the castle imprisoned their serfs here, and now it is the serfs who imprison their lords. These little trifling differences are called a revolution. It appears that my head is to be taken off in thirty-six hours. I see nothing out of the way in this. Still, had you been polite, you might have left me have my snuffbox, which is upstairs in the Hall of Mirrors, where you used to play when you were a child, and I used to dandle you on my knees. Let me tell you one thing, sir; you call yourself Gauvain, and, strange to relate, noble blood flows in your veins; yes, by the God above us, the same that runs in mine! Yet that blood which makes me a man of honour, has made you a traitor. Such is the difference between us. You will tell me that this is not your fault, nor is it mine that I am what I am. By heavens! one becomes a criminal without being aware of it. We inhale it in the very air we breathe. In times like these a man is not responsible for what he does. That rogue of a revolution is the cause of guilt to every one, and the greatest criminals are the most innocent of mortals! What dunderheads! To begin with yourself. Allow me to admire you. Yes, I admire a youth like you. A man of good family, with a good position in the State, having noble blood to shed in a good cause, Viscount of Tower Gauvain, a Prince of Brittany, able to be duke by right, and peer of France by inheritance, which is about all that a sensible man could desire on earth, amuse himself by falling from what he was, to what you are, and doing it so well that to his enemies he seems a villain, and to his friends, an imbecile. By the way, convey my compliments to the Abbé Cimourdain!" The marquis spoke easily and calmly, without any special emphasis, in the same tone, that he would have used in the best society. His eyes were clear and steady, and his hands buried in his pockets. He paused for an instant, drew a deep breath, and continued, "I do not conceal from you, that I have done what I could to kill you, I have myself three times levelled a gun point blank at you. A discourteous proceeding, I confess, but it would be establishing a bad precedent in war if you made yourself too agreeable to your adversaries. For we are in the midst of war, my dear nephew. All around us is fire and blood. Yes, and they have killed the King into the bargain. Nice times indeed!"

He again checked himself, and then went on, "When I think that none of these things would have occurred had they hanged Rousseau, and sent Voltaire to the galleys! Ah, what a plague talented men are! But what complaint have you against monarchy? It was not so bad after all; we talked more for the sake of talking. There were also the riots of demands and petitions. Then up started the Philosophers, and they burnt the writings, instead of the writers; the Court busybodies mixed themselves up in the matter. There were those ninnies, Turgot, Quesnay, Malsherbes, and the scientists of all sorts, and then the dissensions began. All was the work of the scribblers and rhymesters. The Encyclopædia, Diderot, d'Alembert! Ah, the wicked rogues! To think of a man of good family like the King of Prussia letting them get over him. I would have suppressed all those paper scratchers. All our family had the right of high and low justice. You may see on the walls the marks of the wheels by which we quartered criminals. We did not play with them. No, no, no! let us have no scribblers! Whilst an Arouët exists, a Marat will arise. As long as there are villains who write, there will be blackguards who will murder. As long as ink lasts, there will be black stains; as long as men's fingers grasps the goose's feather, frivolous fooleries will give birth to dangerous ones. Books are the cause of ruin. The word Chimæra has two meanings: it means vision and monster. What a price we pay for foolish trash. What are you always prating about rights? The Rights of Man! The Rights of the People! Is that hollow enough, stupid enough, sufficently visionary and devoid of sense? When I tell you that Havoise, a sister of Conan II., brought as a dowry the countship of Brittany to Hoël, Count of Nantes and Cornwall, who left his throne to Alain of the Iron Glove, the uncle of

Bertha, who married Alain the Black, the lord of Roche sur Yon, and whose son was Conan the Little, grandfather of Guy or Gauvain de Thouars, our common ancestor; I state a plain fact, and there are rights attaching to it. But you rogues and pitiful rascals, what do you call your rights? You would, if you could, slay your God, as you have slain your King. Is it not monstrous? Ah, what degraded beasts; and you, sir, I am sorry for it, but you belong to the proud blood of Brittany; both you and I have Gauvain de Thouars for our grandfather, and we had another in the grand Duke of Montbazon, who was a peer of France, and decorated with the Grand Collar of the King's Orders, who attacked the Faubourg of Tours, and was wounded at the battle of Argues, and died Grand Huntsman of France at his house at Couzières, in Touraine, at the age of eighty-six. I could speak further of the Duke of Laudunois, son of the Lady of La Garnache, of Claude de Lorraine, Duke de Chevreuse, and of Henri de Lenoncourt, and of Françoise de Laval Boisdauphin. But what good would it be? My nephew has the honour to be an idiot, and glories in dragging himself down to the level of my groom. Remember this, when you were a child in arms, I was a man. I treated you then as a child, and I will do so again. As you gained in years you lost in position. Since we ceased to see each other, each has gone his own way. I followed honour; you took another road. Ah me! I do not know how it will all finish, but let me tell you that your friends are the lowest and vilest in the scale of humanity. Yes, yes, I agree with you, you have made wonderful progress. You have suppressed the punishment of the pint of water inflicted on the drunken soldier, for three consecutive days, to invent something more terrible, the Convention, Bishop Gobel, Chaumette, and Hébert. You have eradicated the past at one blow, from the Bastille to the best of nobles. You have replaced the saints by vegetables. Good citizens, you are the masters; reign, take your ease, and stop at nothing. That will not prevent religion being religion, and that royalty has existed in our histories fifteen hundred years, and that the old French nobility occupies a loftier position than you do, though you have severed their heads from their bodies. As for your sneers and cavillings over the historic rights of the royal races, we pay no attention to it; Chilpéric was in reality nothing but a monk named Daniel. It was Rainfroi who invented Chilpéric, in order to annoy Charles Martel! We know all these things as well as you do. The question is not there: this is the question. There was a mighty kingdom called France, with a king and all the high officers of state; everything was arranged, nothing was wanting in the working, and you, at one fell swoop, have destroyed everything. All the chivalry of France has been exiled, you will have no more knights, no more heroes. Farewell to your ancient grandeur. Put on mourning for your departed glories. All those grand and glorious events of the past have been wiped from the page of your histories. Arras, Fontenoy, Agnadel, Rocroy, Lens, Staffarde, Nerwinde, Steinkerque, La Marsaille, Raucoux, Lawfeld, Mahon, all gone, go, it is over. You have chosen to be new men, and you will ever be insignificant."

The marquis paused, and then continued.

"But leave *us* great. Kill your kings, nobles, and priests; tear down, ruin, and destroy all with your sacrilegious hand. Trample ancient law beneath your feet; overthrow the throne, stamp on the altar, deny your God. That is your look out. You are cowards and traitors, incapable of self-sacrifice or fidelity. I have said all that I intend to say, and now, viscount, have me guillotined. I have the honour to be your very humble servant." Then he added, "Do not say that I shrank from placing the truth before you. What does it matter to me, I am like a dead man?"

"You are free," said Gauvain.

And Gauvain taking a step towards the marquis, unfastened his commandant's cloak, threw it over his shoulders, and drew the hood down over his eyes.

"Well, what is this for?" asked the marquis.

Gauvain raised his voice, and exclaimed, "Open the door, Lieutenant."

The door opened, and Gauvain said,

"Close the door carefully behind me," and he pushed the astonished marquis across the threshold.

The room that had been converted into a guard-room, was lighted, as has been mentioned, by a horn lantern whose faint rays only made the darkness visible. In this dim light such of the soldiers who were not asleep only saw a tall man enveloped in the braided cloak and hood of the commandant pass through them. They saluted him and he left the guard-room.

The marquis slowly passed through the breach, not without more than once shaking his head, and gained the open. The sentinel believing it to be Gauvain, again presented arms.

When he was at last outside, having the fields once more beneath his feet, within two hundred paces of the forest, and before him, space, night, life, and liberty, he paused, and remained motionless for a moment, like a man who had permitted himself to be forced into a certain line of action, who has yielded to surprise, and who having profited by an open door, seeks to find out whether he has behaved well or ill, and gives himself up for the last time to meditation. After a moment's pause he raised his right hand, snapped his fingers, and crying, "My faith," went on.

The door of the dungeon was firmly closed upon Gauvain.

CHAPTER II.

THE COURT MARTIAL.

At the time of which we write, all Courts Martial were almost discretionary. Dumas had presented to the Legislative Assembly a rough sketch of military jurisprudence, which later on was improved by Talot, in the Council of the Five hundred. But the regular military code was drawn up during the Empire. Let us add in parenthesis, that from this time (the Empire) dates the commencing to receive the vote of the Court from the junior member. This rule did not exist under the Revolution. In 1793, the President of a Court Martial was almost a tribunal himself; he selected the members, classed the order of grades, regulated the manner of voting, and was at once superior officer and judge. Cimourdain had selected for the sitting of the Court Martial that very room on the ground floor where the barricade had been erected, and where a guard had now been posted. He intended to make everything as short as possible, the road from the prison to the tribunal, and the passage from the tribunal to the scaffold. The Court, in conformity with his order, commenced its sitting at noon. The appointments were most humble, three rush-bottomed chairs, a pine table, two lighted candles, and a stool in front of the table. The chairs were for the members of the Court, and the stool for the prisoner. At either end of the table stood stools,—one for the Commissionaire Auditor, who was a quartermaster, and the other for the clerk, who was a corporal. Upon the table were a stick of red sealing wax, a copper seal of the Republic, two inkstands, some sheets of white paper, and two open proclamations. The first contained the decree of outlawry, the second the manifesto of the Convention. The central chair was ornamented by a cluster of tricoloured flags, for in that time of rude simplicity ornaments were rapidly arranged, and it took but little time to transform a guard-room into a tribunal of justice. The chair in the centre which was intended for the President faced the door of the dungeon. The soldiers formed an audience. Two gendarmes stood on guard at the stool. Cimourdain was seated in the centre chair, having on his right Captain Guéchamp, and on his left Sergeant Radoub. Cimourdain wore a hat with a tricoloured cockade in it, his sabre was hung at his side, and he had pistols in his belt; the scar on his face, which was of a brilliant red, added to his fierce appearance. Radoub's wound had been only partially dressed, he had a handkerchief knotted round his head, upon which the bloodstains were slowly spreading. At noon the Court had not yet opened, a mounted orderly, whose horse could be heard pawing the ground outside, stood near the table of the tribunal, Cimourdain was engaged in writing these lines,—

"*Citizen Members of the Committee of Public Safety!*

Lantenac has been taken; he will be executed to-morrow."

He dated and signed this despatch, folded it, sealed it, and handed it to the messenger, who left the room at once. When this was completed Cimourdain said in a loud voice,

"*Open the door of the dungeon!*"

The two gendarmes drew back the bolts, opened the door of the dungeon, and entered.

Cimourdain folded his arms, fixed his eyes upon the door, and cried, "*Bring out the prisoner!*"

Between the two gendarmes a man appeared standing beneath the archway of the open door.

It was Gauvain.

Cimourdain started in amazement. "Gauvain!" cried he, and then added, "I demand the prisoner."

"That is I," answered Gauvain.

"You?"

"I."

"And Lantenac?"

"He is free."

"Free?"

"Yes."

"Escaped?"

"Escaped."

Cimourdain stammered in a trembling voice, "Truly the castle is his, he knows all its secret issues, the dungeon may communicate with some hidden opening, and he may have found means to escape. He would have need of no person's assistance to do that.

"He was aided," said Gauvain.

"To escape?"

"To escape."

"Who aided him then?"

"I."

"You?"

"I."

"You are dreaming."

"I went into the dungeon, and I was alone with the prisoner, I took my cloak off, and put it on him, I drew down the hood over his face. He went out instead of me, I remained, and here I am."

"You did not do it."

"Yes, I did it."

"It is impossible."

"It is the fact."

"Bring Lantenac to me."

"He is no longer here. The soldiers seeing my cloak upon him took him for me, and permitted him to pass. It was night when he got away."

"You are mad."

"I only tell you what happened."

A long pause followed, then Cimourdain murmured in broken accents, "Then you have merited ——"

"*Death*," answered Gauvain.

Cimourdain grew as pale as death. He sat motionless, like a man upon whose head the lightning has descended. He hardly appeared to breathe. A large drop of perspiration stood out on his brow.

He compelled himself to speak calmly.

"Gendarmes," said he, "go and search for the accused."

Gauvain sat down on the stool.

"Gendarmes," continued Cimourdain, "draw your sabres."

Cimourdain's voice had resumed its ordinary tones.

"Let the accused stand up," said he.

CHAPTER III.

THE VOTES OF THE MEMBERS.

GAUVAIN rose to his feet.

"What is your name?" asked Cimourdain.

Gauvain answered, "Gauvain."

Cimourdain continued the examination. "Who are you?"

"I am commandant of the Expeditionary Columns of the Northern Coasts."

"Are you a relative or a connection of the escaped prisoner?"

"I am his grand-nephew."

"You have read the decree of the Convention?"

"I see the copy of it on your table."

"What have you to say about it?"

"That I have countersigned it, that I ordered that, if required, it should be put into execution, and that it is I who had this copy made, and that you will find my name at its foot."

"Choose some one to defend you."

"I will defend myself."

"Then you can say what you wish."

Cimourdain had become calm and impassible, only his impassibility resembled less the calmness of a man than the stillness of a rock.

Gauvain remained for an instant silent, as if to collect his thoughts, and Cimourdain said, "What have you to say in your defence?"

Gauvain raised his head slowly, and, without looking at any one, said, "It is this. One thing prevented my seeing another; a good deed seen too near, hid a hundred criminal actions from me. On one side there was an old man; on the other, three young children, all that caused me to forget my duty. I forgot the villages that had been burned, the devastated fields, the murdered prisoners, the women who had been shot. I forgot France delivered over to England, and I set at liberty the murderer of my country. I alone am the guilty one; in speaking thus, I may seem to be speaking against myself; it is a mistake, I am speaking for myself. When the guilty man acknowledges his fault, he saves the only thing that is worth saving—his honour."

"Is that," returned Cimourdain, "all that you have to say in your defence?"

"I may add that, being the chief, I owed my men an example, and that you, as members of the Court, owe them one too."

"What example do you refer to?"

"My death."

"You think that just and reasonable?"

"Yes, and necessary."

"Sit down."

The quartermaster then got up, and began to read, first the ban of outlawry against the ex-marquis de Lantenac, next the decree of the Convention proclaiming the punishment of death to any one who should favour the escape of a rebel prisoner, and concluded by reading the lines printed at the foot of the decree, "forbidding aid or help to be afforded to the rebel above named, under pain of death," signed Gauvain, *Commandant of the Expeditionary Column.*

Having concluded, the Commissionaire resumed his seat.

Cimourdain crossed his arms, and said, "Accused, pay attention. Audience, look on and keep silence. The law has been read to you, and we shall now proceed to take the votes of the court. Sentence shall be carried by a simple majority. Each member will give his vote in a loud voice, and in the presence of the prisoner, for justice has nothing to conceal. It is your turn, Captain Guéchamp; speak."

Captain Guéchamp appeared to see neither Cimourdain nor Gauvain, his eyes were cast down and immovably fixed on the decree. "The law is plain," said he, "and there is no evading it. A member of a Court Martial is more and less than a man; he is less than a man because he can have no feelings of pity, more than a man because he is a sword of justice. In the year 414 at Rome, Manlius had his son executed for having conquered without orders. Violated discipline requires expiation. Here a law has been violated, and the law is above discipline. Owing to a momentary feeling of pity, the country has been endangered. Pity may swell to the proportions of a crime. The Commandant Gauvain has allowed the rebel Lantenac to escape. Gauvain is guilty, and I vote for *death!*"

"Record this vote, clerk," said Cimourdain.

The clerk wrote down, "Captain Guéchamp, *Death.*"

"You have voted rightly, Guéchamp," said Gauvain, "and I thank you."

"It is the turn of the junior member of the Court to vote," said Cimourdain. "Sergeant Radoub, what do you say?"

Radoub rose to his feet, and, turning towards Gauvain, saluted him, and then broke out with, "If that is the way the law goes, then you may guillotine me, for I give here, before heaven, my most sacred word of honour, that I would have liked to have done, first, what the old man did, and, secondly, what my commandant has done. When I saw that old fellow of eighty years of age jump into the middle of the fire, to pull out those three babies, I said, 'Old man, you are a brave fellow,' and when I hear that my commandant has preserved that old fellow from your beast of a guillotine, I say, thousand names of a name, that my commandant ought to be my general, and he is a true man, and, as for me, I would give him the Cross of Saint Louis, if there were still crosses, or

saints, or Louis. But there! we are going to be idiots all at once. If it was for things like this that we gained the battle of Jemmappes, and Valmy, of Fleurus, and Wattignies, you had better say so at once. What, here is Commandant Gauvain, who for these four months past, has been driving those Royalist asses before him with drums beating and colours flying, and saving the Republic by his sword, and who settled the matter at Dol in a way that showed he had a good head-piece on, and when you have a man like that, you do your best to get rid of him. Instead of electing him your general, you want to cut off his head! I say that it is enough to make a man take a header off the Pont Neuf. You yourself, Citizen Gauvain, my commandant, if you were my corporal instead of being my superior officer, I would tell you just now you talked a lot of rot. The old man did a noble deed in saving the children, and you did a fine thing in saving the old man, and if we are going to guillotine people for good actions, why we had better go to all the devils at once. I had lost the thread of the argument, there is nothing to cling to. All this cannot be true, can it? I prick myself to be sure that I am not dreaming; I can't understand it. So the old man ought to have let the babies be burnt alive, and my commandant ought to have let you cut off the old man's head? Look here, why not guillotine me? I would as soon that you did so as not. Just think, had the children been killed the Red Cap Regiment would have been distressed. Is that what you wanted? Then the best thing that we can do, is to eat each other up. I understand politics as well as any of you, for I belong to the Pike Club. *Sapristi!* we are coming to the end, and I will wind up the matter in my own fashion. I hate things that make you wonder if you are standing on your head or your heels. Why the devil do we get ourselves killed? In order, it seems, that some one may kill our commandant. '*None of that, Lisette.*' I want my commandant, I will have him. I like him better to-day than I did yesterday. Send *him* to the guillotine! Why, you make me laugh! No, we will have nothing of that kind here. I have listened, people may talk as they like; in the first place it is not possible." And Radoub seated himself again. His wound had re-opened, a thin thread of blood oozed from under his bandage, and ran down his neck, on the side where his ear had been.

"Then you vote that the accused be acquitted?" said Cimourdain.

"I vote," answered Radoub, "that he be made a general."

"I ask if you vote for his acquittal."

"I vote for his being made the first man in the Republic."

"Sergeant Radoub, do you vote that Commandant Gauvain be acquitted? Answer, yes or no."

"I vote that my head be cut off in place of his."

"Acquittal," said Cimourdain. "Record it, clerk."

The clerk wrote down, "Sergeant Radoub, *Acquittal.*"

Then the clerk cried out,

"One vote for death, one for acquittal, the votes are equal!"

It was Cimourdain's turn to vote. He rose from his seat, took off his hat, and laid it on the table. He was no longer pale or livid, his face was the colour of clay. Had all the spectators been corpses lying in their winding sheets in expectation of the day of resurrection, the silence could not have been deeper or more profound. Then Cimourdain spoke in a slow solemn voice. "Accused, the case has been heard. In the name of the Republic, this Court Martial by a majority of two voices against one——" he paused and there was a moment of breathless expectation. Was he hesitating before pronouncing the sentence of death, or did he hesitate before granting life? Every listener held his breath.

Cimourdain went on, "*Condemns you to death!*"

This face expressed the tortures which come from a fearful victory. When Jacob forced the angel to bless him, after he had overthrown him in the gloom of night, his face must have worn that same awful smile. It was but a momentary lurid gleam, and then it fled, and Cimourdain once more became the man of marble. He put on his hat, seated himself, and added,

"You will be executed, Gauvain, at sunrise to-morrow."

Gauvain rose, bowed, and said, "I thank the Court."

"Take away the condemned prisoner," said Cimourdain. He gave a sign, the door of the dungeon was flung open, Gauvain re-entered, and the door was closed. The two gendarmes took up a position on each side of the door, a bare sabre in their hands.

They carried off Sergeant Radoub who had fallen to the ground in a state of unconsciousness.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER CIMOURDAIN THE JUDGE, COMES CIMOURDAIN THE TEACHER.

THE camp was like a wasps' nest. In all times, in revolutionary ones above all others, the civic sting which is in the soldier comes out quickly and sharply, and does not hesitate for a moment to pierce the commanding officer even after a moment of victory. The band of the brave men who had captured La Tourgue buzzed very busily; at first they were fierce against Commandant Gauvain, when they heard that Lantenac had escaped. When Gauvain issued from the dungeon in which Lantenac was believed to be imprisoned, the news spread like an electric spark, and in an instant the whole army was informed of the news.

Then a series of murmurs burst forth. The first was, "They are about to try Gauvain, but it is all a farce. Trust ex-nobles and priests; we have just seen a viscount help a marquis to get off, and now we are going to see a priest save a noble." But when the news of Gauvain's condemnation was spread abroad, the murmurs took a different tone. "It is horrible, our chief, our brave leader, our young commander! He is a viscount; well, what of that, there is all the more merit in his being a Republican. What! he, the freer of Pontorson, of Villedieu, of Pont le Beau, the conqueror of Dol and La Tourgue, under whom we can never be vanquished! He, who is the sword of the Republic in La Vendée, the man who for five months has held the brigands at bay, and has repaired all the stupidities of Léchelle and the others? This Cimourdain to dare to condemn him to death, and for what? For saving an old man, who had saved three children. A priest kill a soldier indeed!"

Such were the murmurs that filled the victorious and discontented camp. A fierce anger closed round Cimourdain. Four thousand men against one, that should seem heavy odds, but it is not. These four thousand men were only a crowd, Cimourdain was a will. It was know that Cimourdain frequently bent his brows, and nothing more was required to keep the army in subjection. In these dangerous times it was sufficient for a man to have at his back the shadow of the Committee of Public Safety, to make him dreaded by all, to make curses melt into whispers, and whispers into silence. Cimourdain, in spite of the murmurs, remained the arbiter of Gauvain's fate, as he did of that of all others. They knew that it was no good making any demands of him, that he would simply obey the dictates of his own conscience, a supernatural voice which reached his ear, and his alone. Everything depended upon him. The sentence that he had given as President of the Court Martial, he could rescind as Civil Delagate. He alone had the right to pardon. His power was unlimited. By a sign he could free Gauvain; he was lord of both life and death. He was the master of the guillotine. In this fatal moment his word was law. They could only wait,

Night came.

CHAPTER V.

THE CELL.

THE Hall of Justice had again become the guard-room, and the guard was doubled as on the night before. Two sentinels were placed before the closed door of the prison.

Towards midnight a man holding a lantern in his hand, passed through the guard-room made himself known, and ordered the door of the cell to be opened.

This was Cimourdain. He entered the cell and the door remained on the jar behind him. The dungeon was dark and silent. Cimourdain made a step forward in the gloom, placed his lantern on the floor, and remained motionless. He could hear, in the shadow, the regular respirations of a sleeping man. Cimourdain listened to the peaceful sound, whilst a tinge of sadness crept over his face. Gauvain was at the other extremity of the cell, stretched upon a truss of straw. It was his breathing that Cimourdain had heard; he was fast asleep.

Cimourdain advanced towards him with as little noise as possible; came close up to him, and looked in his face. A mother watching her child's slumber could not have been more tender, or more full of indescribable love. Perhaps that glance of love was stronger than Cimourdain's will. He did as children sometimes do, covered his eyes with his two hands, and remained motionless for a moment. Then he knelt by his side, and raising Gauvain's hands softly to his lips pressed them upon it. Gauvain moved, and opened his eyes filled with that vague surprise that one feels when unexpectedly aroused from slumber. The lantern cast a dim light around the vault. He recognised Cimourdain.

"What, my master, is it you?" asked he. "I was dreaming that Death had kissed my hand."

Cimourdain felt a sudden shock, as one does when an unexpected flood of thoughts passes through the brain. Sometimes such a flood is so high, and its waves so fierce, that it seems as though it would drown the soul. Cimourdain's heart could frame no reply, he merely answered, "Gauvain."

The two gazed on each other,—Cimourdain with his eyes filled with that fire that burns up tears, and Gauvain with his calm, sweet smile.

Gauvain raised himself upon his elbow and said, "That scar, that you have on your face, is the sword cut that was meant for me. Yesterday also you were by my side in the heat of the battle, all for my sake. Had a Providence not placed you by my cradle, where should I have been to-day? In the darkness of ignorance. If I have any knowledge of my duty, it is from you that I have derived it. I was born fast bound in every way. Prejudices are bonds, and you have freed me from those fetters and allowed me to grow, and be free, and that which was already only a mummy, you made a new child of. In what might have been a mere abortion you placed a conscience; without you, I should have grown up little; therefore by you, I live. I was only a nobleman, you made me a citizen; I was but a citizen, you gave me an intellect. As a man, you have fitted me for earthly life, and you have made my soul fit for the life beyond the grave. You have endowed me with human reality, you have presented me with the key of truth, and have gone beyond that, and given me the key of light. My master, I give you all my thanks, it is you who have created me."

Cimourdain sat himself upon the straw beside Gauvain, saying, "I have come here to have my supper with you." Gauvain broke the black bread, and handed it to him. Cimourdain accepted a small piece, then Gauvain offered him the pitcher of water. "You drink first," said Cimourdain. Gauvain drank, then passed the pitcher to his comrade, who drank after him. Gauvain had hardly swallowed a mouthful, but Cimourdain had drunk deeply. During supper Gauvain ate and Cimourdain drank, a mark of the calmness of the one, and the fierce internal fever that was burning up the other. A hideous, indescribable serenity reigned in the cell. The two men began to talk. "Grand events are developing themselves," said Gauvain. "What the Revolution now does is mysterious; behind the visible stands the unseen. The one hides the other. The visible work is rough, the inner is sublime. Now I see all things clearly. It is strange and beautiful. We have had to make use of the materials of the past, hence this wondrous year of '93. A Temple of Civilisation is springing up beneath a scaffold of barbarism."

"Yes," replied Cimourdain, "from this temporary makeshift, the definite will arise, that is to say, right and duty parallel to each other. The taxes proportionate, and progressive, military service compulsory, a levelling of all things without deviation, and over all, yet forming an integral part

of it, that line of rectitude, the law. The Republic of the Absolute!"

"I prefer," answered Gauvain, "the Republic of the Ideal!" He interrupted himself for an instant, and then went on, "Oh, my master! in all that you have just said, where do you place devotion, self-sacrifice, abnegation, the grand interventions of kindness, and of love? To put all in proper balance is good; to set everything in harmony is better. The Lyre has a place above the Balance. Your Republic, weighs, measures, and regulates man, whilst mine bears him away to the blue empyrean. It is the difference between a theorem and an eagle."

"You lose yourself in the clouds."

"And you in scientific calculations."

"There is an illusion in harmony."

"So there is in algebra."

"I would have man made by the rule of Euclid."

"And I," returned Gauvain, "would prefer them as drawn by Homer."

Cimourdain's severe smile rested on Gauvain's face, as though to bring back that wandering soul to earth.

"Poetry—distrust poets."

"Yes, I know that saying well. Put no faith in the breeze, the sunshine, the perfumes of the flowers, and the stars."

"None of these things can give man subsistence."

"How do you know that? Thought is nourishment, to think is to eat."

"No abstract theories; the Republic is simply a case of two and two making four. When I have given to each man the share that belongs to him——"

"It still remains to hand over the share that does not belong to him."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean the immense reciprocal concessions which each owes to all, and which is the element of social life."

"Beyond the strict law of right, there is nothing."

"There is everything."

"I can only see justice."

"I look higher."

"What is higher than justice?"

"Equity."

After a pause Cimourdain resumed, Particularise; I defy you to do so."

"So be it. You wish military service to be made compulsory. Against whom? Against other men. For my part, I would have no military service, I desire peace. You wish to help the wretched, I desire to put an end to misery altogether. You wish proportional taxes, I wish for no taxes at all. I wish the common expense reduced to its lowest figure, and paid by the social surplus."

"What do you mean by that?"

"This first suppresses all those who live on the nation,—the priest, the judge, the soldier. After that, make use of your riches. You fling your manure into the sewer, throw it into your fields. Three quarters of the land lie waste; cultivate France, suppress useless pleasure-lands, divide the commons amongst the people. Let each man have a plot of ground, and each plot of ground a man; you will increase a hundred-fold your social products. France, now, can only give her peasants meat four times in the year; if the soil were well cultivated she would feed three hundred millions of men, all Europe. Make use of nature, that miraculous and despised ally. Make every breath of wind labour for you, every running stream, every magnetic power; the globe has a subterranean network of veins, there is in it a huge flow of water, oil, and fire. Open these veins; with the water feed your fountains, the oil your lamps, the fire your hearths. Think of the movement of the waves, the ebb and flow of the tides. What is the ocean? An enormous force of which no use is made, for the earth is too foolish to make use of the sea."

"There you are, floating down the tide of dreams!"

"That is to say, of full reality."

Then Gauvain asked, "And woman, what would you do with her?"

"Leave her where she is, the servant of man," answered Cimourdain.

"Yes, upon one condition."

"What is it?"

"That man shall be the servant of woman."

"Can you believe in such an idea?" cried Cimourdain. "Man, a servant! Never! man is the master. I admit but one royalty, that of the hearth; man in his own house should be a king."

"Yes, on one condition."

"What is that?"

"That woman shall be the queen."

"That is, that for man, and for woman, you wish for——."

"Equality."

"Equality! can you think of such a thing for two such different beings?"

"I said equality, I did not say identity."

There was another pause, like a truce between two spirits hurling lightnings at each other. Cimourdain was the first to break it. "And the children, to whose charge would you give them?"

"First, to the mother; and, then, to the father; afterwards to the master who educates them; then to the city that makes men of them; then to their country, their true mother; then to Humanity, which is their common ancestor."

"You make no mention of God."

"Each of these—father, mother, master, city, country, and Humanity, are the steps of the ladder that leads to God."

Cimourdain was silent. Gauvain continued, "When one has reached the top of the ladder, we have heaven; God opens the door, and we have but to enter."

Cimourdain beckoned with a hand as a man does to recall another. "Gauvain, come back to earth, we wish to realise the possible."

"Commence by not rendering it impossible."

"The possible can always realise itself."

"Not always; if you are too severe on Utopian schemes, you slay them. There is nothing more defenceless than the egg."

"But it is necessary to grasp Utopia, to impose upon it the yoke of the real, and to frame it in fact. The abstract must be formed into the concrete; what it loses in beauty it will gain in usefulness; it is lessened, but improved. Right must enter into the Law, and when Right is once become Law, then it is absolute. That is what I call the possible."

"The possible is more than that."

"Ah, you are in your dreams once more."

"The possible is a strange and wondrous bird, always soaring out of reach of man."

"It must be caught."

"Living."

Gauvain continued. "My thought is this:—Always moving forward. Had God intended man to go backwards, he would have placed an eye in the back of his head. Let us keep our eyes always on the dawn, the blooming, the birth. That which falls, encourages that which rises, the cracking of a falling tree is an appeal to a growing one. Each age has its own work. To-day civic, to-morrow human. To-day the question of right, to-morrow the question of payment. Payment and right are, after all, the same word. Man does not exist to receive no remuneration. In giving us life, God contracts a debt to us. Right is the inborn payment, payment is the right acquired."

Gauvain spoke like one inspired, and Cimourdain listened.

Their *rôles* were changed, and it now seemed as though the pupil had taken the position of the master.

Cimourdain murmured softly, "You move quickly."

"Perhaps because I have but little time to lose," answered Gauvain with a smile; then he continued, "Oh, my master! glance at the difference between our two Utopias. You desire the garrison to be compulsory, I desire the school to be so. You dream of a man as a soldier, I as a citizen. You wish him to be formidable, I desire that he should be a thinker. You form a republic of swords—I form one of intellects."

Cimourdain cast his eyes upon the stone floor of the cell, and said, "And while waiting for its realisation what would you wish?"

"That which is."

"Then you acquit the present time."

"Yes."

"Why do you do so?"

"Because it is a storm. A storm always is conscious of what it does; for one oak torn up by its roots, how many forests are made healthy! Civilisation was infected by a plague, the mighty wind of Revolution will cure it. Perhaps it is not particular though. But what could it do more than it has done. It was charged with such a sweeping reform. In the presence of the horror of the miasma, I could understand the fury of the tempest. Besides, what is the storm to me, if I have my compass to guide me? And how

can events affect me, if I but have my conscience? And there is a power that we must always permit to act."

"What is that?" asked Cimourdain.

Gauvain lifted his hand above their head, and through the gloomy stonework of the cell, Cimourdain almost fancied that he could see the star-studded heavens. Again there was a pause, which Cimourdain broke. "Society is more powerful than nature; I tell you that this is not possible now, it is a mere vision."

"It is the goal, otherwise of what use is society?

"Remain natural, be a savage. Otaheite is an earthly Paradise. Only in such a Paradise, men do not think. Sooner an intelligent hell, than a besotted heaven. But no, no hell. Let us be a merciful society, greater than nature. Yes, if you can add nothing to nature, why go beyond her? Be contented with work like the ant, with honey like the bee. Remain the toiling slave, instead of the intelligent queen. If you graft anything on to nature, you necessarily become greater than she. If you add, you augment, if you augment, you grow. Society is nature refined. I want to have all that the ant has not, all that is wanting in the hives,—monuments, art, poetry, genius, heroes. To carry burdens for ever is not man's alloted work. No, no; no more pariahs, no more convicts, no more slaves, no more damned! I wish that the attributes of each man should be an emblem of civilisation, and a patron of progress. I would place liberty before the spirit, equality before the heart, fraternity before the soul. No, no; no more yokes. Man was not made to drag chains, but to soar aloft on wings. No more men crawling on the face of the earth. I wish that the earthworm could be changed into a living flower, and take wing. I wish——" he stopped suddenly, his eyes glittered, his lips moved, and he became silent.

The door had been left open. Some of the outer sounds penetrated into the dungeon. The distant clang of trumpets could be heard, it was probably the reveillé, then came the butt ends of muskets striking the ground as the sentinels were relieved, then, as it seemed, quite close to the tower, was a sound like the moving of planks and beams, followed by heavy intermittent sounds like the blow of a hammer.

As Cimourdain listened, his face grew pale. Gauvain seemed to hear nothing.

Some minutes passed thus, and then Cimourdain asked him, "Gauvain, what are you thinking of?"

"Of the future," answered Gauvain.

He again became buried in his reverie. Cimourdain rose from the bed of straw upon which the two had been sitting. Gauvain did not notice it. Keeping his eyes steadily fixed upon the young man who was so deeply plunged in thought, he went out, and the door of the cell closed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DAWN OF A LAST DAY.

The dawn soon came, and with the first gleam of day, a strange, mysterious, and motionless object, which the birds of heaven did not recognise, appeared on the plateau of La Tourgue, above the Forest of Fougères. It had been placed there in the night, and seemed set up rather than built. From afar off, from the distant horizon it looked a mere outline, composed of straight hard lines, having the appearance of a Hebrew letter of the alphabet, or one of those Egyptian hieroglyphics which formed a portion of the ancient riddle. At the first glance, the idea aroused was this thing's utter inutility. It stood amidst the heath, which was in full blossom. One asked to what use could it be put? Then a chill shudder crept over the spectator. The thing was a sort of trestle having four posts for feet. At one end of the trestle were two upright beams, straight and tall, with a cross beam over the top which held suspended some triangular object which looked black against the morning sky. At the other end was a ladder. Between the beams was a kind of panel composed of two movable pieces, which, fitting one into the other, had a round hole about the size of a man's neck; the upper portion of this panel slid in a sort of groove so that it could be raised or lowered as required. Just now the two half ends which composed the round aperture were

drawn apart. At the foot of the two beams could be perceived a hinged plank, which had the appearance of a swing; by the side of this plank was a long basket, between the two beams in front and at the end of the trestle was a square basket. The thing was all painted red. The whole was made of wood except the triangle which was of steel. One felt that the whole thing had been constructed by men's hands, so ugly, mean, and vile was its appearance, and at the same time it looked so dangerous that it might well have been brought there by some evil genius.

This hideous object was the guillotine.

In front of it another monster rose from the ravine; this was La Tourgue. A monster of stone forming a pendant to a monster of wood. For let us remark that when man's hands touch either wood or stone, they lose all their individuality, and take something of their builder into themselves. An edifice is a dogma, a machine is an idea. La Tourgue was the terrible result of a fatal past, which was called the Bastille in Paris, the Tower of London, the Spielberg of Austria, the Escurial of Spain, the Kremlin of Moscow, and the Castle of Saint Angelo at Rome. In La Tourgue were condensed fifteen hundred years, the Middle Ages, vassalage, serfdom, feudality; in the guillotine one year only —'93, but these twelve months counterbalanced those fifteen centuries. La Tourgue was an emblem of Monarchy, and the guillotine of the Revolution. A sinister meeting. On one side the debt, on the other the payment; on one side the inextricable Gothic complication of serf, lord, slave, master, villenage, nobility, the complex laws spreading out into customs, judge and priest combined, innumerable fetters, duties, taxes, mortmain exemptions, prerogatives, prejudices, fanaticism, the Royal Privilege of Bankruptcy, the sceptre, the throne, the regal will and pleasure, the divine right; and the other a simple thing, the axe of the guillotine.

On one side the knot, and on the other the knife. La Tourgue had for many years been the only denizen of the desert. Then it stood with its machicolations from which the boiling oil, the blazing pitch, and the molten lead had rained down upon the heads of former besiegers; with its oubliettes paved with the bones of its victims, with its quartering chamber, and with the dismal tragic associations with which its walls were filled. Its savage form had for years ruled the adjoining forest. In that dark corner it had had fifteen hundred centuries of uninterrupted tranquillity; it had been a power in the country round; and all from feelings of dread had shown it the deepest reverence. It had been without rival, the emblem of barbarism, and now it saw rise up before it, and, as it were, in opposition to it, something as terrible as itself—the guillotine!

Stone seems to have eyes of its own. A statue observes, a tower watches, and the front of a building contemplates. La Tourgue seemed to be examining the guillotine. It had the air of questioning it.

"What was it?"

It seemed to have sprung from the earth, and it was from there, indeed, that it had risen. In an ill-omened soil, the fatal tree had taken root. From that earth, moistened with tears and sweat and blood; from that earth in which so many graves had been dug; from that earth in which had been hidden away so many dead, done to death under various tyrannies; from this earth which concealed so many depths, wherein so many crimes had been concealed, terrible ends indeed had sprung up, on the day appointed,—this embracer, this avenger, this deadly sword-bearing machine, which had shouted to the old world, "I am here!"

For the guillotine had the right to say to the Tower, "I am thy daughter," and at the same time, the Tower, for such things have the elements of life strongly developed in them, felt that it was being slain by its neighbour.

There was an air of terror hanging over La Tourgue, in the presence of this terrible apparition. It seemed to be quaking with fear. That heaped up mass of granite was majestic, if infamous, but those planks with their triangular knife were worse. All-powerful antiquity trembled before all-powerful novelty. Criminal history gazed upon the history of justice. The violence of the past compared itself with the violence of the present. The ancient fortress,

prison, and lordship, within whose walls dismembered victims had shrieked in vain, with its warlike engines, broken and out of date, violated, dismantled, its battlements cast down itself, a heap of ruins, hideous, magnificent, and dead, full of the vertigo of frightful byegone ages, saw the terrible present slowly arise before it. Yesterday trembled before To-day. To-day ancient savagery yielded to modern terror. A force sinking into nothingness opened its terrified eyes upon the newly-born terror, and the phantom glared at the spectre.

On that day, never had the morning been more fresh and beautiful at the rising dawn. A gentle breeze fanned the heath, soft vapours clung to the branches of the trees. The Forest of Fougères, filled with the exhalations of the streams, smoked in the dawn like some vast censer of fragrant incense. The brilliant blue of the firmament, the dazzling whiteness of the clouds, the clear transparency of the waters, the grass, which runs from the delicate tint of the aqua marina to the brilliant hue of the emerald, the groups of trees embracing each other like brothers; the wide extent of grass, the peaceful fields, all had that purity and simplicity, which is the ever-present lesson that nature gives to man. In the midst of all this stood the Tower and the Scaffold, war and punishment, the two incarnations of the blood-stained age, and a bloodstained moment. The screech owl of the night that has passed away, and the bat of the twilight of the future. In the presence of nature odorous with flowers, sweet, loving, and beautiful, the magnificent sun inundated La Tourgue with its beams, and seemed to cry out to man, "Look at your work, and at mine!"

Such dread use can the sun make of its light.

There were many spectators of this scene. The four thousand men composing the Expeditionary Columns had been drawn up on the plateau. They surrounded the guillotine on three sides, so as to form around it a letter E, the artillery placed in the middle of the line forming the central stroke of the letter. The red monster was, as it were, enclosed by these three faces of war. A kind of wall of soldiers filled up the two sides, to the edge of the precipice of the plateau. The side towards the ravine was open, and from it frowned La Tourgue. By these arrangements, an oblong figure was formed, in the centre of which stood the scaffold. As the sun rose, the shadow cast by the guillotine upon the grass grew less and less. The gunners stood by their pieces with lighted port fires. A light cloud of blue smoke rose from the ravine, it was the last of the conflagration of the castle on the bridge dying away. This cloud veiled without concealing La Tourgue, whose lofty battlements commanded a view far and wide; between it and the guillotine was the width of the ravine. A man's voice could reach from one to the other. On to the platform of the tower, the table that had been used at the Court Martial, and the chair adorned with tricolour flags, had been carried, and upon it sat a man perfectly motionless, with his arms crossed. This man was Cimourdain. As on the evening before, he wore his costume of Civil Delegate, his hat with its tricoloured cockade, and his sword and pistols in his belt. He did not utter a word. All were silent, the soldiers stood with their arms ordered, and their eyes fixed upon the ground. Their thoughts ran confusedly on the incidents of the war, on their many skirmishes, on the volleys poured from the hedges, which they had faced so bravely; on the clouds of infuriated peasants, who had melted away before their breath, on the fortresses they had captured, and the battles they had won; and now it seemed as if all the glory that they had gained was to be turned to shame. A feeling of gloom and sadness clutched at each heart. On the scaffold could be seen the executioner moving to and fro and completing his arrangements. The bright gleam of the moving sun filled the sky with its majesty. Suddenly the sound of muffled drums was heard. This funereal roll drew nearer, the ranks opened, and a procession, entering the square, moved towards the scaffold.

First came the drums muffled in black crape, then a company of grenadiers, then a squad of gendarmes, with their drawn sabres in their hands, and then the condemned man—Gauvain!

He was perfectly free, no bonds con-

fined his feet or hands, he was in undress uniform, and wore his sword, behind him came another squad of gendarmes. On his countenance there still remained that pensive expression of pleasure which had illuminated it when he had said to Cimourdain, "I am thinking of the future." Nothing could have been more ineffable and sublime than this lasting smile. On arriving at the fatal spot, his eyes first sought the summit of the tower, he scorned to notice the guillotine. He knew that Cimourdain would make it his duty to be present at his execution, and searching for him, he soon discovered him. Cimourdain was pale and cold, those who were near him could hardly hear him breathe.

When he caught sight of Gauvain not a tremor shook his frame. The condemned man advanced towards the scaffold. With every step that he took he gazed on Cimourdain, and Cimourdain gazed on him; it seemed as if Cimourdain relied on that look for support. Gauvain had reached the foot of the scaffold, and ascended it. The officer commanding the grenadiers followed him, Gauvain unbuckled his sword and gave it to the officer, then he took off his cravat and handed it to the executioner. He seemed like the creation of a dream. Never had he looked more beautiful. His long brown locks floated in the breeze (they had not yet begun to cut the hair before execution). His neck was as white as a woman's, and his bold eye and majestic demeanour made him resemble an archangel. Even on the scaffold he seemed a dreamer. Even that spot has a summit, and Gauvain stood upon it, tranquil and grand. The sun shone full upon him, and formed a halo round him. But now it was necessary to bind the victim, and the executioner approached, cord in hand. Then when the soldiers saw the knife so close to their young commander, they could restrain themselves no longer, and the hearts of the warriors almost broke. That terrible sound, the sigh of a whole army was heard. A shout rose up to the heavens, "Mercy, mercy! Pardon!" Some fell upon their knees, others cast aside their muskets, and raised their hands imploringly to Cimourdain. One grenadier, pointing to the guillotine, cried out, "If you require a substitute, here is one." All repeated frantically, "Mercy, mercy!" in tones that would have softened the hearts of lions, for a soldier's tear is a terrible thing. The executioner hesitated, not knowing what to do. Then a voice, deep and concise, which fell distinctly on every ear, rang harshly from the summit of the tower. "Executioner, do your duty!"

All recognised the inexorable accents of Cimourdain, and as he spoke, the army trembled.

The executioner hesitated no longer, but approached him holding the rope.

"Wait a moment," said Gauvain.

He turned towards the tower, and made a gesture of farewell with his unfettered right hand to Cimourdain, then he permitted himself to be bound, but said to the executioner, "Forgive me, just a moment more;" then he shouted, "Long live the Republic!" They laid him upon the hideous engine, that beautiful head was placed in the collar of ignominy, the executioner gently drew aside his hair, and touched the spring. The knife glided down, first slowly, and then with increasing rapidity; a dull thud was heard. At the same instant there was another sound, the stroke of the axe was answered by the report of a pistol. Cimourdain had seized one of the pistols that he wore in his belt, and as Gauvain's head fell into the basket, he shot himself through the heart. A stream of blood gushed from his mouth, and he fell to the ground a dead man.

And thus these two souls, Tragic Sisters, floated away together, the gloom of the one mingling with the brilliancy of the other

THE END.

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